

PADDLING  
*under*  
PALMETTOS



ST. GEORGE  
RATHBORNE

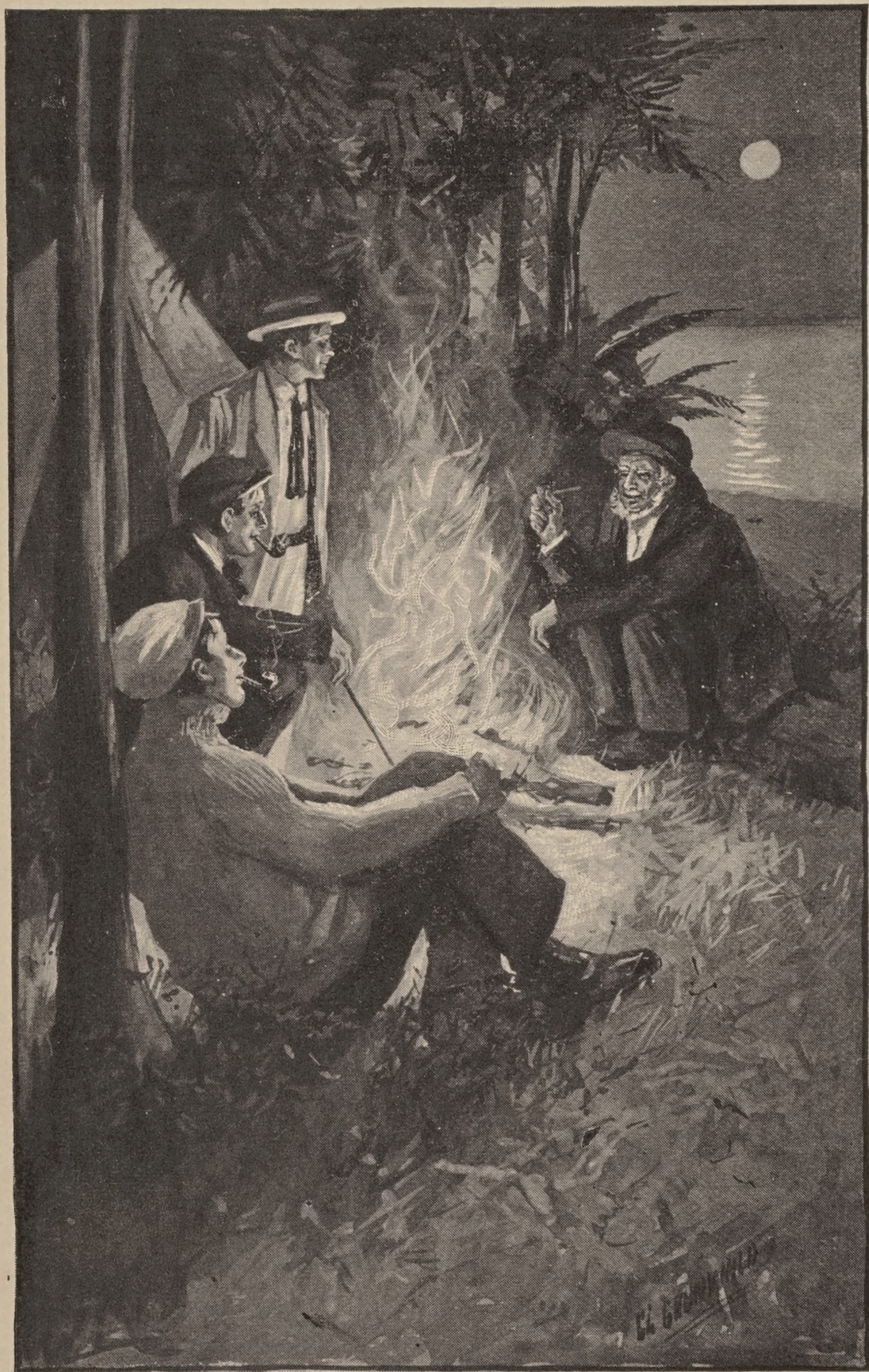












"They sang and joked, and listened to the captain's droll yarns of past experiences."



# Paddling Under Palmettos

BY ✓

ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

AUTHOR OF

“SUNSET RANCH,” “CANOE AND CAMPFIRE,” “DR. JACK,” ETC.

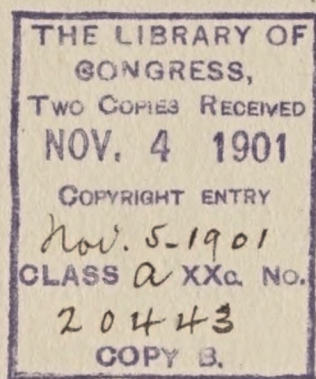


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## PERSONAL.

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To the comrades of one of my earliest Florida cruises, Dr. Charles A. Neide, formerly Secretary and Treasurer of the American Canoe Association, and Capt. Ned Andrews, now a pineapple planter of Eden on Indian River, true disciples of the paddle, and cruisers from "way back," this little volume is inscribed, in the hope that many of the scenes herein narrated may revive pleasant recollections of our cruising life on the Indian River and other waters of fair Florida.

THE AUTHOR.

Mountainside, Westfield, N. J., April, 1901.







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# PADDLING UNDER PALMETTOS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A CANOE CLUB LAUNCH ON THE ST. JOHNS.

Jacksonville, Florida!

The noon train had just come to a stop at the depot, and the usual rush and clamor began.

Through the crowd a trio of young fellows forced their way, whose fresh, ruddy countenances told that they were from the North.

"Which way, now, Ned?" asked the tallest one, speaking to a more sturdy lad.

"Bay street is just a square off. We'll walk to the Carleton, get dinner, and then hunt up our boats. They were shipped by the new line from New York and must surely be here."

The day was a delightful one at the beginning of the year, and especially charming to those who had come from the cold North. It was more like balmy May than January.



Walking along Bay street a dozen blocks, they saw much to attract their notice—many things that were strange to at least one of the party.

Having reached the hotel, opposite the post office, they removed the dust of travel and were soon enjoying a solid repast.

“Make the most of it, boys. In a few days you’ll be introduced to a different style of living,” said Ned, sagely.

His experience in Florida cruising was apt to prove valuable to the party, although the Eastern coast was new stamping ground for him, his previous work having been in the neighborhood of Charlotte Harbor, down along the great gulf.

Dinner over, the boys sauntered down Bay street until they saw on the corner the sign of the Clyde line of steamers.

“Here we are, fellows,” said Archie, turning to the left.

Inquiry at the office revealed the fact that the canoes had arrived three days before.

“They lie out on the dock yonder,” said the agent.

A rush was at once made for the boats. They



were new craft, built especially for this cruise, and the boys had never seen them up to this time.

All were delighted with the results of an inspection.

Two of the boats were of the Mohican design and seemed to have all the requisites for cruising, being roomy and stanch withal.

They were rigged with sails of a pattern known as the Mohican settee, with every appliance for reefing and labor-saving known to "ye modern builders of pleasure boats," possessing also cruising sails of a more modest character.

The third craft was not much different in so far as looks were concerned. Its hull was shapely and beautifully put together, but the rig was of a peculiar character. Later on we will have an opportunity to see how Archie made out with his boat, for there were several ideas of his own which the maker had ingrafted in the little vessel.

Each canoe had a tent, double and single paddle, and other things such as prove necessary on a long trip like that contemplated by the daring young mariners.

The boys had brought all their duffel in their



trunks, and besides, each possessed a camp chest containing screw-top cans for different articles of food, two *flamme* force lamps for cooking, and the innumerable odds and ends that go with a cruising and camping outfit, and which are so familiar to those who have journeyed on river or lake that they need hardly be mentioned here.

When their eyes had feasted upon the boats, that were to be their future homes for many days and nights to come, until they were satisfied, they replaced the movable hatches and locked them.

"Where away now?" asked Archie, who seemed to be more of a novice in Florida cruising than either of the others, although all of them had really seen considerable experience in the line of roughing it.

Dick looked at the little silver watch he carried.

"Three o'clock. I think we would be apt to find some of the boys at the boathouse."

"Let's go, then."

"Wait a moment."

"What idea's seized you now, Dick?"

"I was thinking of our pets here. We've settled the charges, so that the company is no longer responsible for their safety."



"You've hit it exactly," cried Archie, with some show of feeling, for he had already fallen in love with the dandy product of a Canton boatbuilder's handiwork.

"Well, we've an invitation from the gentlemanly members of the Florida Canoe Club to make their boathouse our rendezvous while here."

"Yes."

"Then what's to hinder getting the boats into the water and paddling down to the club?"

"How's the tide?"

"On the ebb."

"Then it's a go," cried the others.

They threw off their coats in a trice and set to work. Such activity promised well for the voyage, for determined fellows like these were bound to get along by hook or crook.

In half an hour the three canoes were wedded to the waters of the St. Johns and all hatches had been stowed away.

"Aboard with you and cast off," said Dick.

They paddled out upon the river.

"Hurrah! Isn't this glorious after freezing in the North!" exclaimed Archie, enthusiastically.



Poor fellow! It was his first trip to Florida.

The others looked at him with a smile, and then Dick winked in the direction of Ned.

They had been there themselves.

"Wait!" said the former.

Archie puzzled over that word, but he failed to grasp its meaning until the next morning.

Then he knew.

"Say, what's all this?" exclaimed Ned, suddenly, as they were swiftly cleaving the dark waters of the St. Johns.

"Halloo! What's wrong?" from Dick.

"Mark front," said Ned, using a term with which he had grown familiar in his many duck shooting experiences.

Looking down the river their eyes were pleased to see several small boats under full sail, beating up against a head-wind.

"Canoes, as I live!" cried Archie.

"A canoe race. I have it. We're near the boat-house. The boys are having a race on the river. Listen—you can hear their friends cheering."

Sure enough, from a point just beyond the inter-



vening boats came loud calls, mingled with the tooting of an agonizing fog horn.

"Hurrah! *Ida's* ahead! Good boy! Toot!toot!"

"Not much. It's the *Louise*. There she comes! Sound the trumpet, boy!"

"*Madeline* wins again! She's 'way ahead on this tack."

As the winning canoe brought up near the clubhouse our three cruisers appeared in view, and were greeted with a round of cheers. They felt at home at once, for the members of the Florida Canoe Club were gentlemen who could not do too much for them.

Our little party expected to spend a week in Jacksonville.

They had accepted of numerous invitations to dinner in this frame of mind.

When the morrow came they changed their minds.

"What in the world is that?" exclaimed Archie at midnight, sitting up in bed as he heard a whistle and howl outside, accompanied by a rushing sound as of an express train under full headway.

Ned laughed.



"That announces the arrival of an old friend."

"An old what?"

"An acquaintance whom you left behind—the north wind."

"Yes, it's a norther. I expected it," grunted Dick, tucking his head under the clothes, with a shiver.

Archie wondered just then what there was about a double-reef breeze to discourage one. He learned something before he was done, and that name of "norther" became associated with stirring memories forever afterward.

In the morning it was six below freezing!

Things looked miserable.

How different from the day before, when the mercury went up to eighty and all nature seemed joyous.

Our friends were filled with animation, however, and went about their business immediately.

It was cold work, and even the baby alligators in the windows of the curio stores seemed to have a half-frozen appearance.



"Ugh, fellows! Let's get out of this as soon as possible," said Dick, with chattering teeth.

"If this is Jacksonville in January I'd rather have stayed North," declared Archie.

Dick pointed down Ocean street.

The grand river could be seen, its surface ruffled into white-caps by the strong wind.

"You'd miss that up North. This is the grandest cruising State in the world," he said, his enthusiasm once more overcoming the dejection brought about by the freezing atmosphere.

"Yes, if you can manage to avoid break-bone fever, malaria, and the thousand and one ills that come from being on marshy water," said Dick, gloomily.

"But we came down here for warmth."

"Then we must strike south to-morrow."

"Can we be ready?" asked Archie.

"Yes, and take advantage of the wind. These northers generally blow themselves out in three days, although I have known them to last for six. Toward the end there comes a beautiful sailing breeze, on which we must try and reach Palatka."



"Good! I'm with you."

They seemed mutually agreed to get farther south as speedily as possible.

Although this same norther makes itself felt through the full length of Florida, down at the lower end of Indian River it is usually only a strong wind with the mercury at from forty to sixty degrees.

They had a letter of introduction to the Burbridge Grocery Company from an officer of the A. C. A., and here they had their list filled out, it having been arranged beforehand.

There were stores along their route, for a time at least, which saved them the necessity of overloading in the start.

Three wide-awake young fellows, full of push and determination, can accomplish considerable in a short space of time, and when evening came they had transferred most of their traps to the canoes in the boathouse.

In the morning they would doff the garb of civilization, don their regimentals, pack their stores, bid good-by to the jolly Pelicans, and be off.

Unfortunately none of the Florida club could ac-



company them, even a part of the way, as they had just returned from a cruise and camp-fire down as far as Titusville, on the Indian River.

This was a thing to be regretted, as they were jolly fellows to keep a fire warm.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE LONG CRUISE BEGUN.

Morning showed no diminution in the force of the cold spell.

Ice had formed in all the gutters, and the three canoe cruisers were determined to head the prows of their craft up the St. Johns without delay.

This river is, I believe, the only one in the United States flowing directly north through the whole of its course, and our boys had much difficulty in heading south to believe they were not descending instead of ascending the grand river.

It was noon ere everything was in readiness for a start.

Dinner had been eaten with the captain and mate of the Pelicans, who waved them adieu from the float of the clubhouse as they struck out upon the stormy bosom of the mighty St. Johns.

The wind being very fresh, they proceeded under double-reefed mainsail alone.

It was exhilarating work, and dangerous withal,



for the wind came fiercely at times, when there was more than usual exposure.

Fortunately several things were in their favor, and these made their start propitious.

There was much for Archie to see, being a stranger in a strange land; but just then his boat demanded his undivided attention.

Four o'clock came and they followed the lead of Ned, who had changed his course and seemed to be heading for shore.

"Here's our camping ground. We'd better take it when we can get it," he called out, and thus showing the wisdom and philosophy of a veteran cruiser.

Archie discovered why the little cove had been selected, for it was sheltered from the searching north wind by a heavy growth of live oaks growing on a hommock just beyond.

Into this cove they ran, and as the water was exceedingly shallow, all of them had to go overboard and pull their boats up on the sandy shore, a piece of "tracking" business with which Florida cruisers soon become familiar.

Having made a landing, they immediately started into business, two of them constructing an excellent



shelter tent with the sails of the boats and a piece of extra canvas carried to be used in case of an emergency, while Archie started a fire with pieces of dead live oak found in abundance, fed with fat, resinous pine.

"What shall we have for supper?" asked Dick, as master of ceremonies.

"Coffee for two. I'll attend to that," said Archie.

"I can be counted on for a stew out of canned corned beef and Boston baked beans," echoed Ned.

"I'm hungry for mullet," Dick said, wistfully, as he glanced out upon the water.

Archie looked up.

"I thought the fish wouldn't bite here when a norther was on," he said, quickly.

"We don't usually catch mullet with a hook, Archie. Look there—see 'em jump."

In the shallow waters of the cove small mullet were leaping out of the water, sometimes as high as two feet.

"Try them, Dick," said Ned, nodding his head.

"I will."

Dick had on his rubber wading boots that came up to his hips. Archie watched him rummage in the



hold of his canoe and finally draw out a net with lead weights attached.

"Ah! I see—the Spanish cast-net," he muttered.

He had never seen one used and watched his companion with interest.

It was just growing dusk, and the mullet had sought just such sheltered nooks in which to carry on their mysterious and apparently meaningless acrobatic feats.

Dick waded out until the water was perhaps two feet deep, his careful eye noting the surface ahead for signs of a school.

He held one of the leads between his teeth, and had gathered several loops of the remainder in his right hand to be released altogether.

The round cast-net is universally used through the South. It is in two sizes, the larger or Spanish net being generally for fishermen and difficult to cast.

Along the bottom are the leads. Leading-strings run from these up to a horn ring in the center of the net.

It is cast with a peculiar rotary movement by the aid of arms, head, and body, falling flat and fully extended upon the surface of the water, when the leads



instantly sink, inclosing the unlucky fish with the net.

The heavy cord attached to the leading-strings is then drawn quickly, the net assumes the manner of a purse, and the fish are safe.

It requires some practice to cast successfully, but later on, when opportunities were plentiful, Archie took a few lessons from his companions, who were proficient in the art, and learned to do the thing with credit.

After many casts, about two dozen small mullet yielded to Dick's prowess. These he cleaned and prepared for the pan.

Several pieces of fat salt pork were tried out in the frying pan first of all, after which he rolled each fish in cracker crumbs and dropped them into the pan. when a tremendous sputtering began.

The boys declared the supper fit for a king, when the small mullet, browned and crisp, had utterly vanished.

When it was over they took the tin platters and cups, filled them with wet sand, rubbed this with the gray moss that hung from the live oaks and cypress trees, and had the dishes cleaned in a trice.



The wind still blew heavily from a point almost due north, and they prepared to pass the night as comfortably as possible.

All was warm and snug under their shelter, though the pungent smoke from the camp-fire persisted in entering to some extent.

Tired with the day's labor, they soon rolled themselves up in their blankets for sleep.

It was their first night out.

Besides the roaring of the wind through the branches of the trees, few other sounds could be heard, but once when Archie awoke he caught the weird hooting of an owl near by and smiled at the familiar cry.

Morning broke clear and sunny, but the norther still held full sway.

Around the camp-fire they studied Ned's charts of the Government Geodetic Coast Survey—of which he carried a full assortment—and it had been decided that they were some thirty-two miles above Jacksonville, having made wonderfully quick time, considering the disadvantages under which they had labored.



An early breakfast and they were afloat once more upon the river.

Up to noon everything worked well, and they had made good progress. Then a halt was declared in order to make a pot of coffee and eat lunch, for all had by this time become thoroughly chilled.

They had just finished the frugal repast when Ned made a discovery—there was an orange grove back of them, and of course a house.

Archie was sent to procure a supply of the golden globes for immediate consumption.

Some thought caused him to take his paddle along—perhaps he had a vague idea that a pole would be necessary in order to knock the oranges down. However that may be, he was ere long glad of such an available weapon.

A couple of savage little curs assailed him, and it was only by alternately knocking over first one and then the other with the canoeist's best friend—his paddle—that he kept the small fiends at bay until a "Cracker," or native, ran out of the cabin and put his assailants to flight.

As Archie yearned for oranges and the Cracker was sadly in need of funds, they soon struck a bar-









"The little fleet was under way at one o'clock, and skimming along over the white-capped waves of the majestic St. Johns." See page 27.



gain, and the pilgrim returned laden down with the fruits of his victory, and proud to show the marks of the dogs' teeth upon his spruce blade.

It was the first adventure of the cruise.

The little fleet was under way at one o'clock, and skimming along over the white-capped waves of the majestic St. Johns, with Ned in the van and Archie bringing up the rear, he being somewhat of a novice, although he had sailed before and was willing to follow where his comrades led as long as he could keep his snug craft right side up.

Let us give what few particulars are necessary here and be done with it, as much of a more interesting nature remains to be told.

These three young fellows constituted the canoe club of a town in New York State not a great distance from Lake George.

They were known as the Red Jackets, in honor of that famous old Indian orator of the Six Nations.

Upon their sails as a totem they had stitched a life-like representation of the head of a red fox.

Ned was captain, Dick the mate, and Archie the balance of the club, honors which his broad shoul-



ders willingly bore and over which he joked at sundry times.

Each man was known at times by the name of his dainty craft.

That of the captain had painted on each side of the bow the word *Sachem*.

Dick called his canoe *Bet*, while Archie had gone further and named his the *Sea Waif*, though as yet it had never been used upon the ocean.

Thus let them be known to the end of the chapter.

Their cargo it would be hard to describe in detail, but by glancing at the inventory of the last-named boat it can be seen what each of them was provided with.

First there was a clothes-bag made of waterproof material, in which all extra clothing, such as a suit of woollen garments, flannel shirt, socks, etc., were kept from dampness. Then came a rubber blanket.

Next to these was the boat tent, made of striped awning goods, presumed to be waterproof, but also frequently deceiving the trusting youth who slept under its warrant. Alongside of this was the camp chest containing cans of groceries, such as tea, cof-



fee, sugar, flour, cornmeal, oatmeal, hominy, etc.; the canned goods, such as corn, succotash, dried beef, Boston baked beans, roast beef, corned beef, etc., lying in the bow, as far as possible, to serve as ballast.

A little rack on one side under the deck held a double-barreled shotgun in a waterproof case.

On the other side a similar rack held a heavy fishing rod.

Then there were a few small culinary articles for use with the *flamme* force alcohol lamps, the large frying pan, coffee pot, and kettle being divided among the three canoes, these to be used only when camping ashore—something that might occur only once in a while when they got far down in the Indian River country.

Next came a small tin box of fishing tackle, some cigar boxes of shells for the gun, a lantern, a camp hatchet, or ax, hunting knife, and, of course, other things that were needed.

Two of the boys had shotguns, while Dick carried a Winchester repeating rifle, of which he was very fond.



All this while they had been making progress, and at dusk Palatka came in sight.

"Let's haul in here and make fast to one of the docks," said Dick.

"Agreed. Seventy-five miles sailing since yesterday noon in a cold breeze satisfies me," returned Ned, as he headed for the city on the right.

They rounded to beyond a wharf and dropped sail.

At once preparations were made for the night, this being always the first thing thought of before even supper was considered.

The painter was made fast to the dock, about ten or twelve feet away, and the three canoes were the same distance apart.

It was easy to get from one to another, in case visiting was desired. Tents now went up, and when this task had been completed the night was coming on, so that dinner was the next consideration.

Archie took a run to the post office for letters and to forward their mail.

Then they settled down for a night of it, the wind increasing in force as the hours wore on.

To a novice the position would have been a strange one, indeed, the small boats dancing the



livelong night on the waves as the wind caught the bow-end of the tents.

They swung a little, and it was determined that before they went to sleep each should throw out from the stern a little Chester folding anchor, two of which were a part of the complement of each boat.

Archie slept fairly well considering the novelty of his position, for although not much of a canoe cruiser he had hunted and fished in many States, and roamed the wilds of Canada, camping out many a time, so that these things were not new to him.



## CHAPTER III.

## ARCHIE MAKES FAST TO A 'COON-OYSTER BAR.

Archie was the first to awaken, and, poking his head through the rear opening of his canoe tent, he saw that morning was at hand.

"Ahoy there, *Bet!*"

"Hello! yourself, *Sea Waif!* What's the row?"

"Why, it's time to get up!"

A minute later Dick poked a cheery face out of his tent.

"Another cold day ahead," he prophesied, with a grimace.

There was every indication of it, for the wind still hung in the north, and showed no inclination to move out of it.

The canoeists were in no great hurry this day, for they had only a few miles to make to Rollston, where the boats were to be taken out of the water, put on the cars, and carried to the Halifax River, on the coast, a distance of some fifty miles.



About ten o'clock they hoisted sail and left the bustling little city of Palatka behind.

A bend in the river gave them every chance to try different methods of sailing, but, so far, the wind was fair and they found no fault to speak of in their boats.

Rollston landing was reached.

It was now noon, and the train would not leave until after three o'clock, so they concluded to have their lunch in the boats before taking them from the river.

Then came the task of lifting the little vessels out and carrying them to a point where they could be put on the cars.

As the baggage car would be too crowded with the three canoes, a flat-car was obtained, by means of which they could be well handled. This was attached to the rear of the train.

"Here comes the steamboat," said Dick, at last, pointing down the river.

It was the *Sylvester*, making her daily trip to Palatka and this landing. Having deposited a few passengers and some freight upon the staging, she turned and began her return trip to Jacksonville.



"All ready?" asked the boy conductor of the train.

"Yes—we can answer for this end of the line," replied Dick, laughing.

"Going to ride on the flat-car?"

"Yes. We're anxious about our boats."

"You'll find it cold work."

"I guess we can stand it, thank you."

A toot of the whistle, and they were *en route* for the Halifax River.

It was, indeed, a cold ride.

As the sun sank lower they shivered in the chilly breeze, although the thick forests through which the new road ran screened them somewhat. They were all cheery, however, and with song and laughter made the time pass.

Night came on, but not darkness, for the moon was in her proudest state, and arose as the sun vanished from view.

The train stopped at a little station, just beyond which numerous fires could be seen in the woods, being made by the Italians who were working on the railroad.

"We drop off half a mile below, at Tomoka Creek. The conductor says he will leave our car there until



he goes back to-morrow. Here's a key to the new storehouse on the other side of the creek, where we can sleep to-night, for it's going to be cold."

This was luck, what Ned announced. Archie thought that if cruisers were treated as kindly everywhere they would have little to complain of. He knew, however, that letters from their friends in Jacksonville had brought about these favors.

Presently they rumbled across the bridge spanning Tomoka Creek. The flat-car was left in front of the new little one-story storehouse, and the train went on to its destination.

In this house the young voyagers made themselves comfortable, cooking a square meal. Then, while Ned made up his log by the light of a lantern and smoked his pipe, Archie and Dick went out for a walk and a tour of investigation.

They found that a staging ran down to the water, and it would be easy work to launch their boats, relieved, as they were, from most of their contents.

The flat-car, with its precious load, stood in the cold moonlight in front of the cabin, and they found it all right when they awoke in the morning.

An early breakfast and then to work. One by



one the canoes were carried down and wedded to the brackish waters of the creek, at this point some sixty feet in width.

Then the cargoes were stowed, after the masts had been stepped. By noon all was ready, and the trio of adventurous cruisers ate a cold lunch.

By this time the wind had slackened and came only in puffs along the creek, although they would evidently find more of it out upon the river when they reached that point.

Archie had scared up a large bevy of quail among the palmettos near the landing, and greatly desired to get a crack at them, but forebore on account of the need for haste.

They set sail. Progress was slow but sure, and, perhaps, in the end this pleases a canoeist as well as a rush, during which the fingers tingle with excitement.

Winding this way and that and passing a little steam tug with a tow of logs, they finally reached the mouth of the creek about two o'clock.

But for Ned's charts they might have stuck in the mud a dozen times, for the channel here is just where a novice would never think of looking for it.



Once upon the Halifax, with the wind dead aft, they sailed merrily on. As the afternoon grew apace the wind increased in strength until the white-caps were dancing along the surface.

It was decided to head for Daytona, and about four o'clock they sighted that place.

The white houses nestling in among the green trees proved a welcome sight. A long wharf jutted out—it being the universal custom to build them in this fashion, as the shores are too shallow to allow of a steamer coming close in. Indeed, in many places the writer has seen a square platform built out in the middle of the Indian River, and the St. Johns also, possibly half a mile from the shore, and from which passengers and freight were transferred to dry ground by sailboats.

The canoes were secured again as on the previous night. It threatened rain now, though the wind continued to blow.

They found Daytona quite a pretty place, though the water-front seemed at that time to be about the only desirable location.

It is now considered the most charming town in



all Florida, and its Ridgewood avenue under the hanging Spanish moss has become famous.

In the night Archie could, for the first time, hear the roaring of the surf, and he realized that they were very close to Old Ocean.

When morning came Dick had some changes to make in his boat, so that the cruisers did not leave Daytona until half-past ten.

The wind was blowing fresh from the north and clouds covered the sky. Ned took the lead, as he carried the charts.

The channel from this time on was obscure, islands appearing here and there; and to make a mistake necessitated tracking or paddling back again, if nothing more serious.

Naturally, at a time like this three boats cannot always keep side by side. There were occasions when for half an hour the canoes were so close together that the skippers, seated upon their decks with legs crossed and the dandy mast for a back support, could converse without howling. Then, again, sudden gusts of wind would seem to affect one more than the others, and thus the boats became sepa-



rated, though managing to keep within hail of each other by means of their skippers' fog horns.

Archie was so pleased to see his craft do so well that he hardly noticed how rapidly he had drawn ahead of the others until, when opposite Port Orange and trending in toward the peninsula shore a mile away, he was aroused from his reverie by hearing a tremendous blast from Ned's fog horn—he knew it was Ned's from a peculiar inflection at the end of the sound.

Looking around, he saw that Ned was away over toward the Port Orange shore, standing up and waving his arms.

What did he mean?

Dick was about half-way between, but had now shifted his course, jibing and running across the wind in the direction of the main shore.

Archie's curiosity was aroused, but he could not make out what it all meant.

He, too, altered his course. An island hid his companions from view, and he aimed to strike below this, so as to intercept them.

These were good intentions, but they came too late. There was a sudden grating, grinding noise,



and the *Sea Waif* came to a full stop, almost pitching her enterprising skipper into the river.

Archie looked over the side in dismay. There was no trouble in learning the truth. The water was clear enough, and he could see the ugly bar of 'coon oysters rising almost to the surface, for the tide was at its ebb.

Here was fun with a vengeance.

To go back was impossible, and a mile of oyster bars lay between him and the channel on the other side of the river.

He tried to work off the reef by using his paddle, with the sails still set, but made such poor progress and at such terrible chances to his boat's planking that it had to be abandoned.

There was only one other thing to do, this was to go overboard and "track."

'Coon oysters grow in great clumps, and with the edges, sharp as knives almost, projecting upward, so it can be seen how formidable a task lies before the skipper of a small boat that has become lost among the shoals.

Archie prepared for business by slipping on a pair of canvas shoes.



Then in he went. The canoe, lightened by this act, was readily pulled over the bar. When deeper water was reached Archie clambered in again, thinking he had got off pretty easily.

Hardly had he seated himself before bang! and he was high up on another oyster reef.

More tracking followed. This time he thought he would look out, but the wind caught his sail, and, ere he could prevent the catastrophe, he was for the third time brought to a sudden stoppage, with a terrible grinding noise that almost palsied him.

This would never do. His boat, being only of light cedar, could not long stand such rough usage.

Evidently he must devise some other means of escape or else stay where he was until the tide arose, which would not be for hours.

First of all he realized that he had no use for either sail until free from these oyster beds—they only swept him on the next bar, so he stowed them out of the way. By this time he had also discovered that the bars ran out from the larboard shore and were some forty feet apart. Between them the water was from three to six feet deep.

His only available course, therefore, was to take



the paddle and cut across the river, keeping in this veritable canal. This he did as soon as he had backed the *Sea Waif* from her anchorage upon the oyster bar.

It was easy enough—all Archie had to do was to keep a sharp lookout ahead, and when he saw the water becoming shallow, paddle away.

He had been floundering about among the reefs for half an hour, as he learned when he consulted his timepiece, but was glad to have gotten out of the ugly mess with only some pieces of 'coon-oyster shells planted alongside his keel.

Where were the others? He found that they had "come to" below and were waiting for him; so, after making sure that he was in the channel again, he hoisted sail and bore away for the rendezvous.

This was Archie's first experience with the little yet mighty 'coon oyster of the Florida reefs; but, I regret to say, it was not the last.



## CHAPTER IV.

## ON THE WONDERFUL INDIAN RIVER.

At two o'clock the cruisers drew up near the new lighthouse, and landing on the sand, proceeded to get something warm for dinner.

Archie took advantage of the halt to change his wet clothes and warm himself, for, although the wind was now several points nearer the east than it had yet been, the air still felt chilly.

Before them was a fine stretch of water some miles in width. A low island was covered with gulls. Man-of-war birds, gannets and hawks sailed in the sky, innumerable buzzards circled over the land, while ducks could be seen in countless numbers.

"There's a shark!" said Dick, pointing to a fin that cleft the water like a knife.

"Yes, and here comes a school of porpoises in with the flood tide."

Archie watched them rolling by. A rowboat containing a gentleman and a negro came up, they having been fishing.



"What luck?" asked Archie, with a sportsman's friendly interest.

He was shown scores of sheepshead caught upon the oyster bars and around the supports of an old wharf just below. The gentleman handed him a dozen or two small fiddler crabs.

"Anchor about twenty feet from the shore," he said, as his man urged the boat on.

Archie was a born angler, if nothing else. He would rather fish than eat. So he pushed out in his craft and commenced fishing, with rare good luck.

So fascinated was he with the sport that his companions could hardly get him to take some coffee and stew. He then had a dozen fair-sized sheepshead in his boat.

They determined to push on for New Smyrna, despite the heavy sea.

Archie privately believed that this was no weather for canoes to be out in, but so long as the others led, he was bold enough to follow.

Off they went, bowling along before a stiff nor'east breeze, fresh from the ocean. The water was salty and looked green.

Before long, away off to port, they sighted some



houses. Then the opening was seen—they were opposite Mosquito Inlet.

The breakers were rolling over the bar at the inlet, and the dainty canoes plunged like restive war horses as they caught the swell.

It was really less than half a mile across, but the passage was rough for the small craft, and, in the midst of it, they came near having an accident.

Archie suddenly heard Dick, just on his starboard quarter, call loudly:

“Look out, Archie!”

He was amazed to see the *Bet* heading directly for him, as though her skipper had gone suddenly mad and wished to run him down; or else his boat had become unmanageable.

Archie maintained his presence of mind, and managed to catch the sharp bow of the *Bet*, deflecting the intruder from its course, so that she ran alongside, and no damage was done.

“What’s the matter, Dick?” he exclaimed.

The young skipper of the *Bet* pointed to his rudder, and Archie saw that the trouble had been caused by one of the stanch cords working loose, thus rendering it next to impossible to steer.



"Shall I take you in tow?" he asked.

"Not if I even have to steer with a paddle; but I think I can lay back and hold the yoke until this run is out."

It had been a bad time for an accident, as the easterly breeze and the morning tide made the sea heavy.

The inlet passed, they entered the more quiet waters of the old Hillsboro River.

An old wreck was sighted, then a long island covered with scrubby mangroves. This was called Sheepshead Cut.

Just beyond it they caught sight of New Smyrna. A steam yacht, which had come in through the inlet ahead of them, was just making anchor half a mile above the place.

Passing by this vessel, they rounded to at about half-past three and made all snug, tying fast to a long landing, as was their custom.

They spent a day here, visiting the old ruins up the river and the orange groves near by.

On the next morning they were ready to start south once more. Archie had meanwhile laid in a



stock of sheephead, and they had enjoyed a fish supper.

The weather had become warmer, though the wind still blew heavily.

They camped in among the trees the second night, where there was a splendid spot, their boats being hauled up on the sandy beach.

There were two wells near by that had been made many years before, relics of the early settlers—some said the old Spanish indigo growers had dug them—and from these they laid in a store of fresh water. This latter is so hard to get in Florida cruising that an opportunity for laying in a stock is never to be neglected.

For about eight miles they had easy work, Ned leading the way, with his charts. Then the wind became more boisterous from a few points out of the north.

They came to a reach where the river made a serpentine bend—an ugly stretch.

Here Ned tacked down the reach with Dick at his heels, but poor Archie was not so fortunate.

First of all, he brought up on an oyster bar, the starboard shore being composed mainly of these



ugly protuberances, upon which the contrary wind seemed bound to blow him.

The more he paddled the worse became his situation, for the treacherous shoals seemed all around him.

By this time his two companions had vanished from view. Archie was all alone. He had worked like a trooper and made some progress, but much of the reach still lay before him.

There was no help for it—overboard he went and began to lead his canoe like a refractory horse.

When the water got too deep he would straddle the boat and make use of his sturdy paddle, the sails having long since come down as useless.

The situation was one he was likely never to forget, and yet, at the time, it possessed little that was laughable. Grit won the day, and by alternate dragging and paddling, helped along by some tall grumblings, the end of the reach was gained.

Here the wind proved favorable again.

Archie brought his mainsail to bear, and, narrowly missing a bar, upon which he heard his keel grate as he passed, he joined his companions, who had brought up below.



His adventure had been a source of amusement for them. They did not find out until later that Archie's boat was rigged so poorly that even the most experienced of canoeists would have found it hard to beat up against such a head-wind.

Another reach was ahead where the same trouble might be expected. This time Dick hovered near, and seeing that poor Archie was about to get into distress again, kindly gave him a tow and bridged the difficulty.

This was a kindness Archie never forgot. He was so wrought up by the strain of the past experience that small things assumed great proportions in his eyes.

They now made furious time for some five or six miles, bringing up at Eldora. Here lived, at that time, where is now a thriving settlement, a genial fellow named Watson, who received them hospitably and did all in his power to make them comfortable.

They camped under his live oaks, ate his oranges and eggs and enjoyed his society. On the following day they walked over to the ocean beach and up



some three miles to Turtle Mound, getting a variety of shells along the sand and watching the surf.

Thus Sunday passed.

The following day being wild and stormy, they agreed to lie by until the next morning, thinking it might be better for their small craft upon the broad Mosquito Lagoon, near the head of which they were now camped.

Mr. Watson invited them to go over among the mangrove islands on the other side of the river and see if they could pick up a few ducks.

The ride was a delightful one, Dick taking his canoe. After much wading through saw-grass and no little work with oars and paddle, they succeeded in bagging two pintail ducks, a blue-winged teal, a mallard, and three willet.

Leaving the marshes, they returned to camp and arranged things in readiness for an early start in the morning.

After breakfast the three canoes were put in commission, and away they went before a merry breeze that, in an hour, brought them to the "cut-off," a sort of canal made as a means of saving six miles of



steamboating, but of little service to sailboats when working against a head wind.

Passing through this, Mosquito Lagoon opened before them—a wide, solitary expanse of water, very shallow in the middle.

They sailed down this, and at noon came to the Haulover Canal, through which they passed, stopping at the farther end to eat lunch near the great dredge. This was the new “Haulover,” the old one being some miles farther south.

The inner man satisfied, they again set sail, and now found themselves upon the broad, placid bosom of the wonderful and romantic Indian River, several miles broad at this point, and five below Titusville.

With a light but agreeable wind they made fair progress, reaching Titusville some hours before sundown of the same day.

Here they found letters from home. The wind had died out entirely, so that the night seemed very still as, anchored to the long dock in their usual way, they sat in their boats close together for a consultation.

Sounds were heard about them—the splash of the mullet, the croak of the mud hen, and the strange



cry of the night heron, sweeping along the shore in search of food.

In the middle of the night they were aroused by the wash and odor of a steamer that had just come in from below. Dick declared she must have a cargo of carbolic acid aboard.

Up at daybreak and disappointed to find it a dead calm, they proceeded to put in their time seeing Titusville.

This was a small task and easily finished.

"Look out yonder. Isn't that a breeze?" asked Archie, about nine o'clock.

"Yes, and from the south, too," returned Ned, ruefully.

It was determined to make sail at once, and at least find some place where they could camp ashore.

After working for some hours and only making about six miles, they drew up under the lee of a point. Wading ashore, they built a fire and had their supper here. Archie was for fishing, and, with the cast-net, succeeded in procuring some mullet for bait.

With these he started in.

Before ten minutes had gone by, the others heard



him give a shout, and, looking out, saw that he was engaged in a tussle with a fish of huge proportions.

He succeeded in getting the gaff-hook into it after much hard work. Upon towing his captive to the shore it proved to be a monster channel bass, or red-snapper, weighing twenty-three pounds.

"Fun enough?" asked Dick, looking at the perspiring fisherman.

Archie tossed his head.

"Well, if you call it fun to tow a log, perhaps I've been having a jolly time; but for my part I'd sooner hitch on to a two-pound, small-mouthed bass up North than one of these fellows, any day. But they eat well, and he was fairly game at times."

And Archie was ready to do his share of the work at mealtime.

That night they again slept in their boats, the shore being sandy and with no good camping ground.



## CHAPTER V.

## IN WHICH OUR CRUISERS STRIKE GAME.

Archie poked his head out of his tent in the morning to find Dick performing his ablutions from the stern of his canoe, his tent being different from the others and opening at the ends.

"Halloo, *Sea Waif!*" was his salutation, in a cheery voice, as he rubbed his ruddy face.

"What's the prospect?"

"Poor for progress—good for sport."

There was logic in his remarks, and Archie shrugged his shoulders as he looked out upon the tossing waters. At this point the Indian River was five miles wide, and the stiff south breeze kicked up quite a sea.

It was resolved, however, to make a long point some three miles ahead, and a start soon showed poor Archie the folly of venturing out upon such rough water in his shell.

The others also soon had enough of it, and crept up along the less troubled waters nearer the shore, using their paddles.



Finally, all gathered in a little bight, and Dick went ashore after some krieker snipe, or pectoral sandpiper as they are also known, which he had seen feeding nearby.

The bang of both barrels announced that he had got in his fell work. Presently he came in sight, and Archie, without looking up from the fire he was building among the rocks, called out:

“How many?”

“One.”

Something shiny and beautifully marked fell before Archie, and he gave a yell.

“Is it dead?” he asked, hastily.

“Well, these diamond rattlesnakes of Florida are gifted with a good many strange powers, but I doubt if even they can do any harm without a head.”

It was a monstrous fellow, some five feet in length, and as thick through the body as a man’s thigh.

“He disputed my passage, and it took two shots to convince him that I had the right of way. Like most men in an argument, he lost his head, and hence I won,” laughed Dick.

“And the snipe?”



"Oh! I knew it was no use going after them. Besides, it's going to rain."

Sure enough, the sprinkle became heavier, the thunder rolled, and the lightning flashed.

"The fire can't stand that. It's lucky we've got our boat tents up. We'll have to eat and sleep aboard to-night again," said sage Ned.

Each man cooked his own supper.

A curious thing was noticed here. The early evening was dark, and with each flash of lightning there was a sudden rush of fish in the water, sounding like the whir of giant paddle wheels—indeed, the cove seemed to be fairly boiling.

Morning showed a fair prospect. After a thunder storm, Dick said, came a "norther," and it seemed as though he were correct, for the wind had shifted to the north, which was, of course, favorable.

They got under way after breakfast, and reached Cocoa about ten o'clock, landing here for a supply of water, some oranges, and a few groceries.

Again the three canoes cut the water under main-sail alone, keeping well together, in case of accident.

Merritt's Island covered their left, and after passing Rockledge they stood over to the other shore,



as they would from this time on be better able to find good anchorage ground there.

The mouth of Banana Creek was passed, and they kept down the coast line. All the while they could hear the booming of the surf, for, at times, only a stretch of a few hundred yards separated them from the ocean.

Finally the wind whipped around to southeast and at last died out entirely, leaving the cruisers at a point of land nearly opposite Melbourne. The canoes were anchored north of the sand-spit and the crew waded ashore to cook supper.

The cast-net was brought into requisition, and while Archie carried a lantern Ned used the net, capturing a mess of fair mullet.

Then the fish-spear was rigged, a lantern, with a reflector made to throw light down into the water, brought into play, and for half an hour they had as much sport as one could wish prodding the finny denizens of the river.

Tiring of it at length, they turned in.

At midnight Archie awoke. What was that?

*"Sea Waif ahoy!"*

He poked his head out of the tent.



"What's up, Dick?" he demanded.

"Wind's whipped around to the north again. We're on the wrong side of the sand-spit if it comes on a blow."

"Yes?"

"Ned and I've been pow-wowing it over, and we think it best to paddle around."

"I'm with you, boys."

Paddling was found to be hard work with the tents up and the breeze freshening, so with one consent they stripped and went overboard, towing the craft across the sand-spit and into the shelter beyond.

The water proved pleasant and the bath enjoyable, though it was a strange hour to take one.

The morning brought a fresh breeze, northeast by north, and by half-past eight the canoe club had started on its Southern journey once more.

On the previous day they had made twenty-three miles, and hoped to beat that record, but about half-past eleven the breeze died out, leaving them becalmed opposite Grant's Island.

The best they could hope for now was to reach the St. Sebastian River, some few miles below, and when



whistling for a breeze failed to effect their purpose, they took the paddles.

Over the glassy sea they went. There were some very picturesque scenes along the shore which Dick expressed a wish to photograph, as he had a small camera with him.

Just then, however, a nice little breeze sprang up from the east.

Gladly they dropped their paddles and stretched every inch of sail. In this manner they drew near the very long pier extending out over the shoals from Mr. Gibson's bluff property, and which had a couple of small, picturesque cottages built upon it. This pier marks the mouth of the St. Sebastian River, and it soon opened to their gaze.

The breeze was favorable for ascending the river, and they went up some five miles, where they found a fair camping spot, though the mosquitoes and sandflies proved troublesome.

Here they determined to rest a few days before resuming the Southern journey. All of them were eager to indulge in sport.

Deer signs could be seen along the bank, but the



aspect of the country was rather disheartening for game.

The air was filled with great birds, such as cormorants, water-turkeys, hawks, buzzards, cranes, and pelicans, but these interested them very little now.

They would have given much to have seen a flock of turkeys.

Ducks they had shot in abundance, but Archie, fond as he was of the game, turned up his nose when it came to plucking them, for they had such a villainous fishy smell that one must needs possess a strong stomach to go them.

Ned finally showed him how easy it was to skin a duck or coot and thus avoid the fishy taste which seems to lie almost wholly just under the skin.

On the following morning it was agreed that Archie should 'tend camp while the others went off into the woods to look for game.

Archie was nothing loth, for he had heard much of the elusive bass of the St. Sebastian and St. Lucie Rivers, and was bent on giving them a turn.

He did try. Fly baits were of no avail; they might have done better in the evening. He experimented



with several things, and at last put on a perch caught with a landing net under the boats, when he had cast some crumbs overboard.

The result was a strike. Archie thrilled at the first grand rush of a big bass, but after that he came in like a log. He weighed eight pounds and seemed to be nearly all mouth. Indeed, Archie, when he saw that cavern open as he drew him in, trembled lest the fish should swallow the boat.

He found there was a difference between bass native to the cold lakes of the North and these warm streams of the Sunny South. It was easy to poke his finger into the side of this fish.

Archie fished no more. He was used to having his bass show game to the last, and a fish of that size ought to be ashamed to allow himself to be dragged to gaff in less than half an hour. He had gently wrestled with the bass four minutes.

As fishing was played out, he thought he would paddle up the little stream a short way and see what lay beyond. The boats of his companions seemed safe where they were.

Before he had passed the two bends just above, he had discovered a long, yellow water-moccasin, had



caught sight of his first alligator—a small fellow about five feet in length, that slid into the water at his approach, being exceedingly wary—and had also seen several 'coons along the shore.

“Come—this is growing interesting,” he thought.

Flocks of robins were to be met with, sometimes numbering many thousands. They congregate here and mate, when they go north a little later.

Ah! what was that—another 'coon? No, Archie knew the bushy tail too well, and the spry movement. It was a dark fox squirrel—a good-sized fellow, too.

Why not make sure of him? He would be good eating in the pot.

A minute later the shotgun had spoken. It was a little Parker twelve-bore that Archie had used for years, duck and snipe shooting along Shinnecock Bay, Long Island, upon the Jersey marshes, in Ohio and Kentucky, and far away among the famous Canadian Muskoka Lakes.

He knew fairly well how to handle it, and Mr. Squirrel went into the bag. This success induced him to look further, and he found a second fellow,



at whom two shells were fired before he condescended to succumb.

Satisfied with his little side hunt, Archie now turned his canoe down the stream and in five minutes sighted the camp.

The fire was still smoldering on the bluff, and the canoes seemed all right.

He paddled carelessly along, and when near the landing-place broke out with a line from one of Dick's favorite shanty songs:

"We're rolling home from old Mohea!"

Hardly had the words left his lips than he became aware of the fact that there was a great commotion aboard the *Sachem*.

The canoe rocked violently, being drawn up just so far on the ground as to place her upon an uneven keel.

Archie's eyes opened wide with astonishment. Had the boys reached camp, and were trying to play a joke on him? The idea brought a smile to his lips.

Perhaps, however, it was something of a more serious nature. A remnant of the old Seminole tribe still lived in the Everglades—they had seen their



hunting fires on the last two nights reflected in the sky. What if——

His cogitations were cut short.

The rolling of the canoe grew more violent until it careened over to one side. Was that Ned fumbling at the tent opening?

"*Sachem*, ahoy, there!" he shouted, cheerily.

There was a more confused movement and then a black object landed with a splash in the shallow water. Archie gave a whoop. It was not the first time he had seen a black bear upon its native heath. Instinctively he reached out his hand for his faithful little Parker.





"The bear had by this time scrambled to the shore and offered a beautiful shot as he climbed the bluff." See Page 65.







## CHAPTER VI.

## DRAGGING ANCHORS.

The situation was plain enough. Even at that moment of excitement he could grasp it.

Urged on by hunger and seeing no human being about the camp, the bear had been nosing around until his keen scent had carried him to one of the two canoes.

Here he had clambered over the side and had been busily engaged trying to devour the edible contents, when Archie's shout had struck alarm to his guilty heart.

Like all other thieves he was a coward, and his first motion had been toward escape, a feat that he found some trouble in accomplishing, having neglected to mark the spot where he entered the tented boat, the flap serving as a door being down.

Archie reached for his gun. He forgot that it held charges of No. 6 shot. The bear had by this time scrambled to the shore and offered a beautiful shot as he climbed the little bluff.

Both barrels were let fly. Bruin growled and



turned half-around, as though disposed to resent such an insult as this.

Archie slipped in two more shells, but when he raised his eyes to look for the bear, behold! the latter had vanished like dew in the morning. Discretion was better than valor.

When Archie drew his boat up alongside the others, his first act was to dive down into one of his cartridge boxes and secure several buckshot shells.

Two of these he slipped into his gun.

Then he went ashore and climbed the bluff, but if he expected to see the bear sitting there on his haunches waiting for him he was mistaken. Bruin was more shrewd than that.

Seeing no signs of the late thief, Archie went below to ascertain what damage had been done.

He found a sorry mess in the *Sachem*, where the brute had knocked the lid from Ned's camp chest and spread himself upon the provender. Archie firmly believed the bear had been about to open a can of baked beans with the can-opener when he was disturbed by the shout outside.

He covered up the traces of the old wretch's visit



as well as he could and then climbed aboard his own craft again.

Presently he heard the voices of the others returning.

They soon came in sight. If he was looking to see them bearing a deer or even a wild turkey upon their shoulders, he was disappointed.

Both Ned and Dick looked tired and mad. They scanned Archie's face closely.

"Where's your game?" asked the latter, in the quizzical way usual to the party who stays at home to guard the camp.

"Oh! we've left 'em all in a heap down on the bank of a creek. Too warm work toting 'em. Perhaps we can send a wagon down, or maybe you feel like going after 'em," replied Ned.

"Honest Injun, now——"

"No honest Injun about it, Archie. We haven't fired our guns since we left. Saw a few signs, but this is a poor country for game. The Seminoles have cleaned it out. But we did hear you pop away half a dozen times. What was up? Shooting at a mark, I reckon?"

"No—bear!" Archie replied, nonchalantly.



"A bear?" almost screamed the others.  
"Where?"

"Right here in camp."

"In your imagination, I reckon."

"Ned, do you know a bear's tracks when you see them?"

"Well, I ought to," replied the other.

"Look before you. What d'ye call that?"

Ned bent down—then he uttered a grunt.

"Bless me if he isn't right, and they seem to have come up over the bluff. A bear has been down to drink. Where was he when you sighted him first, Archie?"

"In the *Sachem*—turned skipper and cook."

The boys looked incredulous and Dick laughed.

"If you don't believe it look for yourselves," continued the camp guard.

Presently various bitter denunciations from Ned attested that the mess in his canoe had convinced him that Archie spoke the truth.

Nothing short of the story would satisfy them now, so Archie told it all, holding up the squirrels in proof.

The hunters had about concluded that they did



not want to stay up the St. Sebastian longer, as the prospect for game was small, so it was concluded to leave on the next morning, providing the wind was favorable.

Another poor night was passed. It was warm, and both sand flies and mosquitoes were troublesome.

Their bars of cheese-cloth came in very handy—indeed, they could not have existed well without them.

When morning came it brought a welcome breeze from the west.

As usual, when from this direction, it was puffy, but suited their purpose very well. Breakfast was cooked upon the shore. They had made a stew of the squirrels on the previous night, so that now they had fried bacon, hominy, and flapjacks, together with maple syrup and coffee.

“All hands on deck to make sail!” called Ned as the breakfast pans were disposed of.

It took them only about five minutes to get under way, and they were soon moving down the river, which was nothing more than a deep creek at this point.



The wind at times died away, so that they were some hours in reaching the mouth of the river.

They found a nasty sea awaited them out on the Indian River, with the wind veering toward the south, so it was concluded to land.

Some time was spent wandering about the plantations on the romantic-looking bluff that marks the southern shore of the St. Sebastian at its junction with the Indian River, and finally they determined to paddle down below the long pier in search of an anchorage.

This was found, and for once they were foolish enough to anchor in an exposed place with short cables.

They never did it again.

The afternoon was balmy; shielded as they were from the wind by the bluff that arose some ten feet, surmounted with cabbage palms, they even took a bath and enjoyed it.

Archie had donned a straw hat coming down the St. Sebastian, as the sun's rays were powerful, and his sailor comrades had jokingly declared that hat would bring some evil down upon them; but Archie was stubborn and stuck to the hat.



Alas! the prophecy was fulfilled.

At about ten o'clock, waking up, Archie looked out. It was a quiet night—ominously so, but he thought it lovely, not knowing the treacherous nature of this Florida country as well as did his two companions.

He looked at the sky, and saw the stars shining brightly. The air was still balmy. All around could be heard the rush of the mullet as their enemies, the channel bass, cavallia and sea trout, chased them through the shallow water.

From the water line came the croaking cry of that weird bird, the night heron, and an owl solemnly bemoaned his sad lot from one of the dead live oaks and cypress trees in the potato field beyond the bank of the stream.

Archie yawned and crept back to his blanket, falling asleep almost instantly.

It was about midnight when he was aroused by a dull, roaring noise that came sweeping down the river, and sounded like the onrush of a freight train.

Startled, he sat up.

At that moment the boat began to heave to and fro violently, and the tent to wobble about in a ter-



rific manner. No need to tell Archie now what was the matter, while these fearful noises were singing about his ears like mad hornets.

A terrific "norther" had swept down upon them like a thunderbolt from a clear sky. Already, as he sprang for the bow, he could feel the little boat dragging her anchor, which, with a short cable, had no grip upon the sandy bottom.

He tore loose the end of the tent and looked out.

Around him all was inky blackness. The wind was howling like a pack of demons let loose as it surged through the tall palmettos that, standing upon the river bank, were outlined against the sky.

Overhead it was ominously gray—the stars had vanished.

Archie saw that he was being swept along with almost race-horse speed. He fancied he heard his companions shouting, but the clamor of the storm drowned their words.

Instantly he let out all the cable there was attached to his anchor—about fifty feet—but it was of no avail, the tent catching the terrific wind like a sail. Then he snatched up his second anchor, or left bower, rigged it, and cast it off the starboard



bow, paying out that cable and fastening it to the mainmast.

Still his progress was unchecked—the anchors would not take hold. He could see the palm trees apparently gliding past. It was raining now, and Archie thought the deuce was to pay.

Ah! what was that? His keel grated on the sand. This was a chance to draw ashore—no telling what might happen if he passed beyond the point near which he now found himself.

Without another thought than of saving his boat as well as himself, he immediately sprang overboard. The water was only to his knees, but already the waves were sweeping along in rapid succession, and each one arose nearly to his hips.

Through the darkness and rain he dragged his canoe in to shore.

Here fortune favored him, for he found a tree that had fallen into the water, and behind this he moored his boat.

Then he crept in to put on his vest, and begun to shiver in the chilly blast, wet with spray as he found himself. The tent was flapping so wildly from his tearing the fastenings loose, that he



thought it best to cut it down and secure it over the cockpit in lieu of a hatch.

What of his companions? Old cruisers as they were should have been equal to such an emergency and early surmounted the difficulty.

Looking out and up the coast line, he saw a light that could only come from the tent of a canoe, and determined to ascertain how they had fared. Archie waded ashore and stumbled along the little beach until he reached the light.

The *Sachem* had come ashore, and veteran Ned was busy lifting her out so that she would not pound against the rocks.

"Where's Dick?"

"Here," said a voice, as a water-logged individual arose out of the waves, and Dick's jolly face appeared in view. "Got an extra cable, Ned?"

"Yes. In the boat, back of the mess chest."

"Tell you why later. *Bet's* all right."

And as he seized the rope Dick vanished in the gloom, wading out into the rolling waves.

After a little the others saw a light on the water, and they knew that *Bet* was riding the storm.

When Dick appeared in the morning he told of his



peculiar adventure. The *Sachem* had swung around, narrowly escaping a collision with his boat, which dragged anchor more slowly than the rest.

Dick, finding he could not make the anchor hold, had leaped overboard up to his waist, in order to do something more radical.

As luck would have it, his foot struck a submerged stake. Quick as thought he had whipped his cable around it and then gone ashore as before stated.

Archie crept back to his boat, and with Ned's help anchored the *Sea Waif* out so that she could not pound against the rocks. Then he crept under the blankets, and held the tent-cover down for at least five mortal hours, the longest he ever spent.

It was a night to be remembered.



## CHAPTER VII.

## A FEATHER ROOST IN THE SWAMP.

Archie was shivering part of the time, for, be it remembered, he had three times been in the water, not to speak of the rain and spray that dashed over him when every wave that came rolling along would strike the *Sea Waif* on her starboard bow with a bang and then splash over the tent-hatch, while the wind at times tried hard to tear the covering loose.

Wearied and cold, he determined to go ashore, and, climbing the bank, see if a fire could be started, as daylight was not far off.

As he made his way along with some dry clothes in his hand he saw a few sparks shoot heavenward, and, pulling himself up the bank by means of some roots, found Ned toasting his shins before a small fire.

Morning came. They were all full of talk about the night's mishaps, and the two old cruisers thought they had the laugh on Archie for his scare, but he secretly believed that when the rush of the



norther burst upon them and they realized that they dragged anchor, these selfsame veterans felt in anything but a laughing humor—at least his recollection favored such a theory.

The wind howled all day, although the sky was perfectly clear. Dick and Archie walked down to the Sebastian post office, which was also the general store. Sebastian had about three houses, with the inevitable steamboat pier jutting out into the river.

One of the postmaster's boats, a skipjack, had torn loose from her moorings in the gale and could be seen half a mile down the river, where she had become fast again, riding the waves, buoyantly enough for a castaway.

That night the boys determined to sleep ashore, and passed the hours of darkness comfortably enough.

It was decided to move on the next day, and ride out the end of the norther.

About noon they bade farewell to St. Sebastian and the scene of their midnight revel.

The wind held out until they were well in the Narrows, when it began to die out; still they floated on the rest of the afternoon with the tide,



which was on the ebb, and passing out of the Indian River Inlet.

A wonderful echo was discovered by Ned, which repeated a whole line, or a long tra-la-la on his horn as plainly as it was given. He secured all the solid amusement possible out of it, and so like a human voice did it appear that Archie almost expected to hear an indignant answer to some of the humorous questions Ned propounded.

They met a sharpie, manned by half-a-dozen oystermen, proceeding in a way common to the natives—by means of the setting-poles.

The water being generally shallow, progress could be readily made in this way when the wind failed, though, of course, our lads, with their paddles, had a better means of getting on—a spruce wind.

At last it was determined to enter a cove Dick found upon his charts, where they prepared to pass the night.

Mangroves surrounded them, flocks of pelicans and cranes flew overhead, aiming for certain roosts near by, and Archie saw numerous egrets pass by with considerable envy, for he desired a skin, and was determined to get one.



Presently his gun sounded and a large, white bird fell with a splash into the water of the cove. Archie had bagged his game, and was satisfied.

It was a lovely evening, with the sky clear, and a gentle zephyr breathing upon the face of the water.

Some oystermen rowed by out in the Narrows, trolling a song, and soon they were followed by three fishermen in a large boat bound for Indian River Inlet, miles below.

Supper was eaten just as the balmy night and the carnivorous mosquitoes closed around them. Pipes were brought into play to keep the tents clear, and the little bars of cheese-cloth arranged so as to exclude the pests.

Archie had just finished his log and was thinking of paying a visit to his comrades, when——

“Ahoy, *Sea Waif!*”

“Well?”

“What are you doing?”

“Just finished my log and meditating.”

“I’ve got a proposal.”

Archie poked his head out of the canoe.

“Glad to hear it.”



"There's a 'roost' over in the swamp, and I thought you'd like to visit it."

"What's a 'roost?' "

"You noticed that all the birds flying over us went to the north?"

"Yes."

"Well, they congregate by the thousand in a certain high patch of timber a quarter of a mile or so above. It's a sight worth seeing."

"What says Ned?"

"Oh! he's not in the deal. He's seen too many roosts to bother. If you'd like to go, say the word."

"I'm your rooster. What shall I do?"

"Put on your wading-boots, see that your lantern is filled, and take your gun along and a variety of shells, for there's no telling what kind of game we may run across in the swamp. That's all."

"Ready in ten minutes."

Archie was true to his word.

Dick crawled aboard the *Sea Waif*, and the canoe was pushed to the northern side of the cove.

The tide was going out, but little earth could be found, only the strange roots of the mangroves, looking like the fingers of a man with the gout.



Over these they would have to make most of their trip.

Both had lighted lanterns, for it was very dark in the trees. Before leaving they took their bearings and arranged a code of signals with Ned in case they should get into trouble.

Then they set out.

A strange sight to see two fellows in red flannel shirts working their way through that odd timber, carrying guns and lanterns. No doubt the owls stared and the 'coons looked down in wonder.

They made slow progress.

More than once Archie was sure he saw the sinuous folds of a snake vanishing from their path, but he said nothing, for once embarked in an enterprise he was bound to stick.

Frequently he felt the hanging Spanish moss sweep against his cheek, and could not but shudder at the thought of it being some vampire bat, such as he had read about in travelers' tales of the Amazon country.

Their surroundings became even more gloomy as they went deeper into the stretch of land existing between the Indian River and old Mother Ocean.



The feeble beating of the surf, that hollow, muffled sound, told them the tide was going out, for when the flood came in the waves sounded doubly sonorous.

They soon found themselves in a swamp, and had to pick their way along in a very careful manner. Splashes here and there told of some reptile dropping down from cypress hummock into the water at their approach.

Archie watched his companion nervously.

There was no wavering on Dick's part—he was an old woodsman; and, although he had never been here before, he had watched the flight of the great birds at sundown and knew from infallible signs just where the “roost” must be located.

Presently the swamp seemed to end, or else they had come to an oasis in the heart of it, for the ground appeared, and with it some timber other than the everlasting mangroves.

“We're nearly there,” said Dick, breaking the silence that had fallen upon them.

“Glad to hear it,” returned Archie, heartily.

The skipper of the *Bet* was right—they were close upon the roost.



Such a sight! Would Archie ever forget it as long as he lived? The trees were laden down with great birds, and in places broken branches lay upon the ground, which was covered with guano to the depth of many inches, showing that this had for years been a favorite resting rendezvous for this multitude of birds.

They walked about surveying the scene as well as they could by the aid of their feeble lanterns.

It was amazing, the number and variety of water-birds here congregated, for they could discover herons and cranes, water-turkeys, buzzards, crows, egrets and others. Yes, they even saw upon the water of a small pond scores of pelicans that seemed to appreciate company.

Dick pointed out the birds.

"I see a sand-hill crane that I'm bound to have. They eat as well as turkey, and are seldom found except in a solitary state. Listen and watch."

He glanced along the barrel of his gun and then came the discharge. A great commotion ensued, and yet few birds left their roosts. Thousands might have been slaughtered by plumage hunters.



The wretched sand-hill crane fell and Archie gathered him in.

"I don't call that bird a crane," said Dick, when the commotion had ceased, "though he goes by such a name. He don't live on frogs and fish like the rest of the tribe, but lays on to grain most of the time. That's what makes his flesh so good. That's why we hear his cry back from the water in the wood tangle. To me he is a plover, or the prince of the curlew tribe. I'm only astonished to find him here."

They found no mate to him.

After shooting a few more birds to obtain the feathers and skins, among which were one scarlet ibis, a white ibis, and an egret, they thought about returning.

This was easier said than done, and when they had floundered about for some time even honest Dick was forced to admit the solemn truth.

They were lost!

Ordinarily this might mean nothing, but a night in this swamp was anything but a pleasure to anticipate.

Dick remained cool, however, for he wished to



show Archie, whom he knew to be something of a woodsman, that such a little thing did not discompose him.

Under all circumstances the first thing must be to keep from becoming excited, and determine what was the best course.

"As near as I can tell the camp lies in that direction from which we can hear the distant booming of the surf. The wind is light and dead east, as you can tell from the stars. Yes, the camp must lie in that direction. What do you think, Archie?"

"I would put it a point farther west; say, straight toward that blazing star."

"Glad to hear you speak so positively. Now, I'll give Ned the signal, and both listen for all we're worth."

He took out a revolver and fired three shots in the air, with an interval of five seconds between each.

Hark! Was that a shout?

"Ahoy!" it came. "Ahoy! ahoy!"

Dick looked at his companion.

"Archie, you were right. That voice seemed to come directly from the blazing star. The camp lies there and is close by."



Then he raised his voice and answered Ned's hail.

In ten minutes they were upon the edge of the little cove where the three canoes had put up for the night.

"I was lying here watching the sky and thinking how bright the Indian hunting-fires were to-night to make such a glow in the western heavens, when I heard your signal and answered it. If I hadn't got a reply I'd have fired the rifle," said Ned, after he had tossed over their trophies with the air of one who had seen much of this sort of thing.

"Why do the Indians have hunting-fires in the night?" asked Archie, who believed in gaining information even at the expense of exposing his ignorance.

"They come up from the Everglades on a grand hunt, warriors, squaws and boys. The squaws and boys start a fire from one given point to another, according to the wind, and watch the blaze, while the men do all the hunting. They hunt to windward of the fire, and, forming in line, chase the deer on until, hemmed in by the flames and their human enemies, the game is gathered in a small space, perhaps a patch of timber. From this point they are



started one or two at a time, it may be, and killed. The Seminoles have become butchers, for they slaughter game for the sake of the hides now, which they sell for wyhomee."

"What's that?"

"The booze—whisky. I have known them to kill four hundred deer and about a hundred bear within a short distance of where we are camped, over on the main land, where their fires now burn."

"The scamps! No wonder game is getting scarce in Florida. What a waste—and to think I've never even had a chance to get my first deer!" said Archie, indignantly.

"Your time will soon come, my boy," laughed Ned.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## TWO GALLANT RED JACKETS STORMBOUND.

The weather was now clear and warm and very enjoyable.

When breakfast had been duly disposed of, it was found that there was a failing north zephyr, which they were anxious to take advantage of. Not long after starting they found themselves becalmed, and there was nothing to do but await the coming of a breeze.

Dick had broken his patent Radix brass center-board in some way, and he was anxious to reach Eden in order to fix it.

As the case now stood, his boat was almost helpless in a head sea and wind, as she could not eat her way into the teeth of the wind as ordinarily.

So there now existed a delightful uncertainty as to the direction from whence the breeze would spring, for there was certainly wind in the sky.

"Southeast!" grunted Dick, in disgust, as he pointed to a slight ripple on the otherwise smooth water in that quarter.



And southeast it was.

In ten minutes a fine breeze was on and the boats began to show their merits.

Ned had to hold the *Sachem* in like a restive steed. He drew near the others.

"What shall I do, Dick? This is Thursday, you know, and we agreed to meet the old captain at Eden on Sunday. He won't wait, and if this breeze holds out three days, as it gives indications of doing, you can't get there on time."

"Would you go on alone?"

"If Archie and yourself don't mind. Half our sport would be lost should we miss the jolly old captain."

"Bon voyage, old fellows!" called out Archie. "Dick and I'll stick closer than brothers. We'll pull into Eden some time if we have to wade there."

Ned was off, the beautiful little *Sachem* riding the water like a duck and making fine headway.

Dick and Archie breasted the seas on long and short legs until one o'clock. By this time they had grown tired of tacking, and it proved wet work, too.

Ned had passed out of sight around a head point, and was bound to reach St. Lucie by night, if not do



better. Another day would bring him to Captain Richards' place at Eden.

The wind was very boisterous and the sea held high carnival, for they were now about the head of St. Lucie Sound, which is some miles across.

At Dick's advice they made one more short leg across, losing ground, and anchored under the lee of the eastern shore.

Here they proceeded to cook dinner, and it was one bright feature in their eventful cruise, that no matter what trouble they passed through they were always ready to do full justice to their meals.

When this important duty had been concluded and both of the adventurous cruisers were feeling pretty bold, Dick suggested that they tackle the stiff breeze again for a spurt.

They had little or no shelter where they had stopped should the wind whip around to the southwest, and it was apt to do just that at any time.

Archie looked out on the heaving sea, but said nothing, though he thought a great deal. He would have preferred creeping down the coast line in quiet water, using his paddle moderately, until a good spot was found for the night.



Dick threw his dandy forward, stowing away the mainmast and sail. Then they started out.

Archie could outpoint the *Bet*, now that the latter had a crippled centerboard, and neither of them made much headway in the heavy sea.

It was pretty dusty out in the middle, and every nerve was strained to the utmost tension as the little cockle-shells dashed on, making good time but poor progress south.

Between one and two hours used them up, and even then they had only made a mile, but Dick accomplished what he had set out to perform.

His chart had shown him a cove on the eastern shore.

They made it.

Here they were beautifully screened from everything but a west wind, and even that in shallow water would not cause them much inconvenience.

The cove was not very large. At the upper end was a little creek, which had a turtle pen in it, used by the turtlers to keep their captives.

Not a living soul did they see.

Archie paddled around the point on a tour of investigation, as well as to see if he could find oysters.



In fifteen minutes he returned with a hundred fine ones, picked up by hand in the shallow water. They needed a little salt, but were fat and luscious, some being as large as the palm of the hand.

Here Dick proved his right to the title of the oyster king. He said he ate fifty-seven raw, and the pyramid of shells under the canoe seemed to verify it. A dozen satisfied Archie, but he opened a tin cupful to fry for breakfast.

They had only made about five miles that day, but hoped to do better on the morrow.

Archie boiled a saucepan of rice, a favorite dish with him, and invited Dick over to help eat it; but a woeful accident allowed the lantern to drop square into the kettle from the hook above in the tent, just after the condensed milk and sugar had been stirred in.

There was a suspicious odor of kerosene about the feast, although Dick, who had not eaten any supper since punishing the oysters, declared he liked it.

Archie was up at dawn and had finished his breakfast long before Dick. The wind arose gently in the east and gave promise of some weather.

When Archie had packed his tent away and



washed off the deck of his canoe he was ready to start.

As Dick, with the wisdom of an old cruiser, did not believe in hurrying at any time, Archie amused himself watching a fishhawk that sat on a rock out in the water anticipating his morning meal.

He had not long to wait.

As usual, the mullet were leaping about like acrobats. Suddenly the hawk arose in the air, fluttered for a few seconds almost stationary, and then, darting down like a flash of light, struck the water, not head first as the gulls and pelicans do, but in a way to fasten its claws into its victim.

As the hawk arose, the skipper of the *Sea Waif* saw a fat mullet in its talons. But a shadow fell on the water, and, looking up, Archie saw that pirate of the air, the noble white-headed eagle, circling around, watching Mr. Hawk.

In vain the hawk circled and climbed the air. He was steadily followed by the feathered robber until at length, to save himself, he was obliged to let the mullet fall.

They were far up in the heavens to all appearances when this occurred.



Archie heard a rushing sound, and then saw the lordly robber just over his head with the disputed fish in his possession, deliberately winging his way to an old dead tree on the shore near by.

“Dick, I’m going to try for that old villain,” he said, hotly.

Slipping a couple of buckshot cartridges into his gun, he took the paddle and crept along the shore line in his canoe. But the white-headed bird’s keen eye noticed him, and it left its perch ere he had reached the point he was aiming for.

Archie snatched up his Parker and fired one barrel after the other. Some feathers fell, but the bird kept on. Probably one of the buckshot had passed through its wing.

Dick announced himself ready at last, and Archie threw both sails to the gentle breeze. They could make fair enough progress while the wind remained in the east.

They kept within a reasonable distance of the friendly east shore, but it was not long before Archie piled up on an oyster bar

“I knew that was there. I could see the shoal,” said Dick, sagely, as he sailed past in deeper water.



Archie made a laughing reply to the effect that he always liked to study the topography of the river bottom, and released his stranded craft easily enough by backing.

In five minutes there was a grating sound. This time it was the *Bet* piled high on a shoal which her skipper did not see.

He could not back water, because his broken centerboard prevented, so he had to push with might and main.

After that they set over for the western shore, as the channel seemed to run there. Dick's chart had come to an end with the last night's camp in the cove, so that from this time on they must make guesswork of it.

Until ten o'clock they made fine time, but about then the wind worked around to the same old quarter, southeast by south, and the sea became very heavy as they were passing Indian River Inlet.

They made slow time at St. Lucie, but persisted, and came near being swamped more than once. At this point the sound was several miles across, and a sweeping wind made an ugly sea on the west shore.



When noon came they hauled in near a couple of turtlers' cabins.

Lunch was eaten and they put to sea again, but the wind was working so to the south that even hardy Dick confessed it was foolish to buck against it. Progress under such circumstances is dearly bought, and on the Indian River, especially, it pays to wait for a fair breeze.

They anchored in the mud, but the prospect of spending the night in this exposed position was not very acceptable to one who liked solid comfort as much as Dick.

A mile below, on the other shore, they saw what seemed to be a cove.

"This is no canoe weather, Dick, and I don't like the idea of sleeping here. We might go ashore, but my canoe bed is the most comfortable. What say?"

"I'd propose cutting across for that cove. This deuced wind may hold us for days, and we want to be comfortable."

"Well, if you say so, lead on. But please be careful."

"I think we can risk it with the dandy. Secure everything, for it's wild enough out in the middle



for any Mohican or Red Jacket who ever sailed in a mosquito fleet. Is it a go?"

"Yes," said the novice, boldly.

Archie would not have backed out even had he known he was in for an upset in the middle of that turmoil of water.

They made all safe.

Dick started first, and was a quarter of the way across ere Archie headed the brave little *Sea Waif's* nose into the wild wind and sea.

They fell off considerably to leeward, but that was to be expected under the circumstances.

When the middle was gained Archie had shipped very little water, but it required no inconsiderable skill to meet each unusually heavy wave that came rolling on so that the canoe would plow into it. Had one of them taken her squarely on the quarter there might have been some extraordinary excitement.

Slowly but surely they crossed, and at length lost the sweep of the wind that came out of a large bayou, or pocket, ahead.

Closer up to the shore it was gentle sailing. At four o'clock, exactly, they passed into the snug har-



bor formed by the cove they had seen from across the sound.

Here they dropped anchor, surrounded by mangroves; but no solid ground could be seen.

Dick explored a sort of creek at the end of the cove, and reported a dead turtle, around which the buzzards were gathering.

Putting on his wading-boots as evening drew near, Archie whipped the water with a white miller fly. Soon he had a small cavallia, and the next time a peculiar prize, with a stripe, that Dick pronounced a sergeant fish.

So it went on. Fish seemed plenty, though none were of any great size.

The mosquitoes were in evidence, too, and now they proved in an energetic way that they did not belong to the harmless "blind" tribe.

The captain of the *Bet* finished the supply of oysters brought along, and mourned because they had gotten beyond the immense oyster beds of the Indian River, though a closer search might have revealed the bivalves near by.

They had logged some thirteen miles that day, according to guesswork, and, being just in sight of St.



Lucie's white houses, they believed the settlement five miles away.

This made Eden eleven miles away.

Oh! for a fair wind on the morrow.

The sky in the west looked black, and the surf roared unusually loud. Were these indications of a storm?

Archie looked out for the last time ere going to bed, and, finding things serene, turned in.

It was a restless night; the canoe cramped him and seemed almost like a coffin, so that he was glad when morning came. There seemed to be no change in the aspect; the wind came from the same quarter and the sea was just as heavy.

Dick was for going on.

Archie said nothing, but made ready, and let his comrade lead the way. They kept rather close to the shore, and made a mile in gallant style.

Then the big bayou opened on them. Phew! how the wind tore out of it, and the seas rode high.

Archie laughed and set his teeth hard, driving the *Sea Waif* into the wind as well as she would go.

It was slow work and wet work, but they could



have made it in time, and once beyond the bayou the shore line would have protected them as before.

Archie's full attention was directed to managing his canoe, and when he heard a shout he looked up, surprised to see the *Bet* jibe and turn on the back track further out.

He tried to come about, but it was impossible in such a heavy sea, and he then understood why his companion had jibed.

This easy but dangerous manoeuvre was accomplished without spilling more than a bucketful of water into the bowels of the *Sea Waif*, and shortly after they were in comparatively quiet water.

Dick pulled up and anchored half-way to the cove.

"No use, Archie. The *Bet* is in a dangerous condition with the loss of her centerboard. She rolls like a log on the waves. We must lay to and wait," he said, with resignation. Dick was nothing if not philosophical.

The sun was warm, and soon the cruisers lay back engaged in reading light literature brought for the purpose—Marryat's works.

When noon came they had lunch, being able to use their *flamme* force-lamp stoves to advantage.



"I say, Dick," said Archie, in a subdued tone, the canoes being only a score of feet apart.

"Well?"

"If I get a 'coon will you skin him?"

"Will I? Count on me. I'll skin all the 'coons you shoot about here. Why, about three years ago when I was visiting——"

The bang of a gun interrupted him.

"There's your 'coon kicking among the roots of that tree, Dick. Hush! By Jove! here's another smelling him—a young, fat fellow."

"Hold on! I didn't bargain——"

Another bang!

"Down he goes. This is fine work. I feel equal to a dozen. Bring on your 'coons," exclaimed Archie, slipping in fresh shells.

"But I don't. Spare me," said Dick.

No more were seen, so Archie secured the two victims, and gravely deposited them on the deck of the *Bet*. He expected to see his companion toss them overboard, but instead Dick felt of them with glistening eyes.

"This young one is prime. Now, perhaps, I can show you how I saw the darkies cook a 'coon on



my long canoe trip down the Mississippi River. I don't know whether you will eat it, but if you like young baked pig I think it will strike you about right."

He went ashore, for there was a little dry ground at this place, and half an hour later Archie saw smoke ascending.

He forgot all about it until later on, when Dick produced the baked 'coon.

Neither of them took a great fancy to it, but Archie could see how a taste for the dish might be cultivated.

"How did you bake it without an oven?" he asked, in surprise.

"I made one."

"Out of what?"

"Mud."

"Oh, yes; I've heard of old hunters doing that, but I didn't dream you knew of it."

"I've been around some," said Dick, smiling quietly.

Indeed he had. Few young fellows had seen more of the country east of the Rockies, from snowshoeing and moose hunting in New Brunswick, canoe-



ing in Maine, Canada, and upper and lower Mississippi, many of the rivers and lakes, down to the Gulf and the intricate waters of Florida.

As the afternoon waned they paddled back disconsolately to their last night's harbor, with no progress made. It was discouraging. Worse than this, real trouble stared them in the face, for their fresh water was getting low. Dick had about two gallons, while Archie guessed he had one.

This was far from pleasant. Why, it made them thirsty only to think of it. All day they had seen but two boats on the river, and these were scudding before the wind under what Dick called a "goose wing," being a mere capful of canvas.

It was a boisterous wind that closed the curtains of that night.



## CHAPTER IX.

## A DEER HUNT ON THE ST. LUCIE.

The next day was Sunday.

Archie awoke about the middle of the night. It looked threatening, as clouds were scurrying across the face of the sky and the wind caused his boat to tug at her anchors, so he steadied her by throwing out a second mud hook from the stern.

Even while he worked some drops of rain fell, but the storm passed off, and morning found things just as they had been for such a weary time.

There was no hope of leaving their present anchorage that day, for the broken centerboard made beating against such a combination next to impossible. Their fresh water was very low; they now used very little for cooking except for coffee or tea. What they had was far from fresh, having been in the tins since leaving Cocoa. This is the one objectionable feature of canoe cruising on salt water. Larger boats have little trouble in carrying all the fresh water they need, but canoes are small at their best and their stowage capacity limited.



The weary day wore on.

Everything was lovely, save the one fact that the strong breeze came from the wrong quarter.

"We've had wind enough from the south and southeast these three days back to have carried the fleet from Jupiter up to Titusville, and yet we haven't made an inch, so to speak," grumbled Dick.

It was so sunny and balmly in the cove that toward noon Dick sailed out to see what the weather looked like down in the direction of that big bayou. He came back and reported it as rough as ever, and hoped that pocket of wind would soon give out.

Two sharpies came in sight, tacking down the river.

They were the first boats going that way the boys had seen for several days, and they fired a gun to attract attention, so that if the captains ran into Eden and found Ned they could report all well.

Slowly the afternoon closed.

Dick looked critically at the sky.

"I think to-morrow will see a change," he announced, eagerly.

"Surely the wind can't blow this way forever," said Archie, doubtfully.



"This isn't anything to what I saw it last winter when I was down in this region. Then it howled from one quarter for a whole week. Being storm-bound I went off with the captain deer hunting."

"Tell me about it," demanded Archie; "anything to kill time and make us forget we are marooned here in this miserable cove."

"There were some things about that deer hunt that impressed it upon my mind, and I don't mind telling about it."

The canoes were side by side, as they had not arranged them for the night. Dick lay back on his cushions, puffed away at his pipe reflectively, and then began:

"Some one had left an old birch-bark canoe with the captain, and I took a fancy to paddle it around to revive our recollections of days spent in Canada. The captain proposed that we take the boat and go up the St. Lucie for a deer hunt. I was agreeable, so we put the canoe on board his sharpie and set sail. The wind was steady, a point east of south, and my destination being Jupiter Light, there was no use in trying to beat through the Narrows, so I was biding my time.



“Up in the mouth of the St. Lucie we anchored the sharpie and passed the night. Early in the morning we were up, and breakfast was speedily disposed of. Then, leaving a boy on board, we entered the birch-bark and paddled several miles up the river.

“The captain had hunted so much in this region that he seemed to know every foot of territory. We were aiming now for a certain spot where a deer trail led to the water. It is customary, as you know, having been there yourself, Archie, to watch these runways in New York State while the hounds are after the deer back in the timber, and when hard pressed the deer make for the water, thus affording a splendid chance for a shot. All that is legitimate sport. This clubbing deer to death in the water is an abomination, a butchery which I can't too strongly condemn.

“Well, their methods of hunting deer down in this region differ exceedingly from those. Here they generally ‘still hunt.’ On the pine levels the eye can see a long distance through the trees, for there is little or no undergrowth. Hunting to windward, when by standing on a stump or a log one sees a



deer in the distance, perhaps at one of the 'burns,' it is next in order to creep within gunshot. Sometimes dogs are used, but in a more legitimate way than up North."

"What is a 'burn,' Dick?" asked Archie.

"It is an open piece of ground where the dead grass is burned each winter, so as to start the green growth. They are attractive spots, and cattle come to graze there. Of course the deer take advantage of this fact, too, and at this time of year can generally be found in such places. Well, the captain posted me on the edge of the water, in some tall saw grass. I was in the canoe. He himself went around the pond—for the patch of water was little else—and I saw no more of him for some time.

"I watched the water for an hour, and there was no sign of deer. Becoming wearied, I sat down and dozed. Every little while I would raise my head and give a glance around the water's edge. You can understand this thing became quite monotonous after a time.

"The sun was low in the west and twilight near; still no deer. I was dozing no longer, because the plagued sand flies had put in an appearance, and



were swarming around me in a way savage enough to make a fellow wild. Some people don't mind their stings, but just then I seemed peculiarly susceptible to them. My face and hands burned like fire. In vain I drew on gloves and elevated the collar of my pea-jacket—they seemed to concentrate more furiously upon the parts still exposed, until I was ready to give up. A smudge would have sent them off, but how was I to build one watching for deer? The idea was absurd, but I determined that, as I was only there for fun, this martyrdom was not to be endured any longer. I would strike out upon the water and call for the captain.

“Standing up in the bow of the boat I gave one push with the paddle, mechanically holding my gun in the other hand. The birch-bark, light as a cork, floated out upon the water. Then I received such a shock as I had never before experienced. Bless me, old fellow, if there on the other shore, just at the foot of the runway, didn't I see a herd of deer—yes, actually a herd, and the leader with the biggest antlers I ever saw on a Florida runt deer.

“The sight nearly paralyzed me, and yet, to my



credit, I had sense enough left to drop the paddle and push my gun forward. It was a Winchester, the best gun I ever handled, and as true as steel. Judge of my astonishment just then to see the captain poke his head and shoulders out of the thicket not twenty feet away, to all appearances, from where the deer stood. The animals had by this time noticed me, but they showed little signs of fear. It was quite evident that the captain did not know of their presence until he saw me standing there with my gun at my shoulder. I picked out the fellow with the noblest pair of horns and let drive, for I had never been able to get a good pair of antlers on a Florida deer before then. He dropped, and the rest turned to make off. My game sprang to his feet, but before he had made two leaps I had fired again, and once more he went down, this time to rise no more. It was pretty late to send a shot after the others, but I did it, and felt rather than saw that the bullet had gone home.

“The captain, at my first shot had leaped back in the thicket, and I could hear him crashing along. I knew he was trying to reach the runway before the



deer were out of sight. A single shot from the woods announced that he had at least managed to accomplish this, and with what success I could hardly say. I paddled over to the other side and sprang ashore. My game lay there safe and sound, and, hearing the captain calling, I went up the runway. To my surprise I found him bending over a dead deer, which already had its throat cut, a duty I had not neglected to perform ere leaving my game. The captain's bullet had struck just back of the foreleg as the deer was rounding a bend in the trail that in another second would have concealed him from view.

“‘How's this?’ I said, pointing to a hole in his body besides. ‘I didn't hear you fire twice.’

“‘I only shot once,’ he replied.

“‘Then this was the fellow I struck on the full jump.’

“There could be no doubt of it, and the singular thing was that the captain had picked out the same animal. Probably the wound had caused it to fall behind its fellows and enabled him to get in his fire.”

“It was a peculiar hunt. How came it the cap-



tain did not know of the deer until he saw you ready to fire?" asked Archie.

"We never really knew—they came on the scene like ghosts," said Dick, musingly, for successful hunts always bring keen pleasure to the participant in later days.



## CHAPTER X.

## EDEN AT LAST.

Again it was morning.

Archie slept a little later than usual, for his night had been a restless one, what with the souging of the wind, the rocking of the boat, and clamorous voices of night birds, and his dreams of home.

"*Sea Waif*, ahoy!"

This familiar hail aroused him, and out came his head.

"What's the good word, Dick?"

"Wind died down about four o'clock, and now blowing very soft."

"From where?"

"South southeast."

"The deuce!"

"Don't fret. We'll get no more wind from that quarter for some days. It's blown itself out now."

"Yes, time for a norther," declared Archie, sarcastically.

"Mark me, we'll have it before night," and the



wise weather prophet looked all around the horizon at the "signs."

Something was brewing, that was positive. Heavy clouds were in the west—in fact, all around it looked lowering.

"On what grounds do you base your prophecy?" asked Archie, interested.

"On the way the clouds are gathering in the north. We may get westerly squalls first, but something will follow."

"We can't stay here."

Dick shut his teeth hard.

"And Eden ten miles away. We've got to get out of this now or never."

"Hurrah! I'm with you, old man."

Breakfast was soon ready. Archie was for starting without, in his impatience, and eating a snack of ship biscuit and dried mullet on the way, but Dick put his foot down on such a proposition.

"In all my cruising there have been few times that I failed to get a decent morning meal when I had the opportunity. No man can tell how he will be able to get the next one in such cruising as ours. No,



sir, I am in for coffee and a stew," he declared, stoutly.

"Then put me down for coffee, bacon and buckwheats. Might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," laughed Archie.

His best trait was his good nature. His companions never found him anything but cheerful, even when buffeting the most adverse circumstances. That means much when two or three are thrown together for weeks at a time, on a cruise.

When eight o'clock came it found them ready to do battle with the elements in all their whims.

Every inch of sail was set, and in the light breeze they hoped to make their way down the shore. If they could do no better they could cross the sound and reach the house of a turtler, where their water cans might be replenished.

Before they had gone fifty yards Archie saw that the change his companion predicted was coming.

The clouds had gathered in the west, and looking back he discovered that St. Lucie was blotted out of sight.

A tremendous rain squall was sweeping down the river, and it came from the north, sure enough.



They slipped on their oilskins in haste. By this time the squall had struck a skipjack a mile astern, and it was immediately blotted out as if by night.

Archie did not like the looks of things.

"I'm going nearer shore and anchor until we see what's what," he called out.

His mind was full of the night of confusion at the mouth of the St. Sebastian, when they went dragging anchors before the terrible norther.

Dick called to him to come on, and reduced sail himself, but the wind was already howling and Archie did not catch his words.

He ran in near the shore where the 'coons had been shot on the second day before, and anchored.

By this time the storm had arrived, and rain fell in torrents, so that Archie afterward had to bail the *Sea Waif* out.

What should he do? To go on was impossible, as he could not see thirty feet away in such a rain-fall. To go back to the cove was his only recourse should the squall keep on. He sat down to wait.

For ten minutes the rain continued to pour down; then it ceased as suddenly as it had begun.



Archie's feet were wet, for he had on canvas shoes, but the oilskins had protected him otherwise.

The wind still blew very strong, but it was now from the northwest.

Losing no time Archie cracked on every inch of his cruising sail, raised his anchor, and then went whirling down the sound before a piping breeze. Where was the *Bet*? Not in sight, that was sure. Dick had evidently hauled in somewhere to wait for his companion.

As Archie reached the mouth of the big bayou he saw the *Bet* at anchor behind the point and shouted to his friend, who immediately started to join him; but the treacherous wind began to die out and finally whipped around to the old quarter, southeast.

How aggravating!

By half-past ten they had made three miles and reached a small house on the west shore of the river, the property of a Chicago man, who allowed them a small quantity of water of very poor quality—from a barrel-spring—for emergencies, in case they did not get to Eden. He was building a better well some way off, he said. This place was afterward called Ankona.



When they were ready to go on again the wind was fair. It came out of the west. Dick's prophecy was being fulfilled, for it must surely work into the north now.

So they glided along.

How lovely it was to lie back and feel the wind fill the sails, after the drudgery of paddling and poling.

It was exhilarating!

They kept very near together. The wind grew fresher, and, as is usual down in that strange country, when out of the west, began to come in gusts.

They tore along, keeping near the west shore, for the water was not as rough there, being sheltered by the banks.

So savage were these flaws that they presently had to stow the dandy.

Even then, when they saw a squall strike the water and rush along with incredible swiftness, it became necessary to ease up the sheet and hang over the weather side to hold her up.

Eternal vigilance is the price of safety in a canoe when enduring squally weather. The eye must be quick to see, and the body equally responsive in its



action, for many a time the loss of a second means a disastrous upset.

Nothing of the kind, however, occurred to our adventurous voyagers.

Eden was sighted in the distance, the usual pier, a thousand feet long, just being built, some boats at anchor, and a white house back of the smaller dock—the post office and old store belonging to Captain Richards.

As they drew nearer, all doubt was expelled from Archie's mind by a large sign bearing the name Eden.

Talk of shipwrecked mariners feeling joy at sight of a vessel, or lost travelers in the desert finding a spring of bubbling water in a green oasis under the palms! it compared well with the grateful feeling that came upon our young friends when they reached the object of their long-deferred hopes.

Ned awaited them on the pier and had a hearty hand-shake for each.

He had been getting a little worried about them, and yet, knowing the weather so well, could guess how they were stormbound.

Archie went at once for letters and was fortunate



enough to get one, although there had been no mail down for a week.

Eden struck him as by far the prettiest place along the river. At this point the river bank was some twenty feet in height. Captain Richards' house, where he, at that time, took boarders, was a very pleasant building with a porch along the front.

It was surrounded by flower beds and orange trees. The air was full of the odor of blossoms, for lemon and lime trees were in full bloom, and the sour or native oranges were breaking out.

Archie was enchanted.

Here, at last, was the realization of what he had fancied he should see in Florida, and which he had as yet failed to find.

Ah! Here was the well-known captain, the "pine-apple-man of Eden," as he was known along the river, a tall Jerseyman, formerly from Newark, jolly, obliging, and with a twinkle in his eye that was a sufficient guaranty for his love of fun.

Archie liked him from the start. His boys were grown up and built upon the same plan as their father—good-natured.

The captain was erecting a house of eight rooms



as an annex, but the season did not promise to be heavy, so he would hardly need it that year.

Ned was eager to get away, but in consideration of his friends having arrived after so much trouble, he said nothing about going yet.

The old captain had been on hand, though he was away just then on Richards' sharpie fishing and getting oysters at Indian River.

Later in the day he turned up.

Archie looked through the vegetable garden and was pleased to know it was really possible to have strawberries and tomatoes here very nearly every month in the year.

These things made up, in a measure, for the many discomforts. He had already become philosophical, and learned to take things as they came, being surprised at nothing, and surprises were plentiful enough, many of them very disagreeable in their nature.

Then he walked up the rise through the great pineapple patch, acres in extent.

This was before the time when ugly sheds were built over the fields, marring their beauty, but saving the plants from frost and sun-scorching.



Back of this was a windmill, or wind-engine, for raising water, and beyond a lake, or savannah, that, only a few years back, was full of alligators, although it was extremely doubtful whether one remained at this day.

The alligator is extremely well thinned out along all traveled routes in Florida. If you want to see him in all his hideous glory, you must penetrate the swamps or go to the Everglades. There you will find enough of them to make the sight common.

By ascending the fresh-water tributaries of the Indian River in small canoes that only draw a few inches of water, you can still shoot some of these reptiles, but they are fast going in that quarter.

The invitation extended to strangers is about like this: "Come and see me, and we'll have a 'gator-hunt in the swamp." Thousands are slain for their hides alone and the teeth thrown in. Tourists with their guides kill other thousands, so that it is only a question of time as to when they will be so thoroughly cleaned out that to see one will be the exception and not the rule.

Archie walked back to the house.

All was so pleasant on shore that it was hard to



believe a norther had started in, and yet such was the case.

The wind was blowing down the river now just as hard as it had blown up stream for the last three days. It rushed through the tops of the palmettos with the sound of an express train. There were no longer any squalls, but a steady wind that would have taken a good sharpie and a bold skipper from Titusville to Eden in twenty-four hours, barring any accident.

In the gardens were flowers of many kinds, all in full bloom, for there had been no frost in Eden this year.

Near the boat landing several young cocoanut trees were rearing their graceful heads to the top of the bank. Bananas, guavas, figs—all these things Archie had seen, and they no longer possessed that novelty that brings with it the charm of newness.

He was ready to start when the others gave the word.

When he reached the river he found that the sharpie had arrived and was anchored out in the stream, the water being too shallow to permit her



coming to the small dock, though this northern wind would soon raise it.

With Dick and Ned leaning against the railing of the steps leading down below, was a grizzled old sea-dog—a man whose bronzed face and gray hair told that he had seen a life of adventure on the water.

This was the captain.

He was quaint in his way, and yet he could strike a truth home with sledge-hammer blows.

Archie was introduced, and stood near listening. At the same time he was taking the measure of Ned's old friend, with whom he had cruised the waters of Charlotte Harbor two years before in a large boat.

Archie's conclusion was that he would like the old captain.

He was a walking encyclopedia—a fund of information on any topic.

Through his whole life he had been a lover of the gun and rod, and never neglected an opportunity to indulge his weakness when business would permit.

In his way the old captain was rough, but Archie soon learned that he was a keen reader of human nature and could "size" a man up to a dot.



Besides, the captain always had a fund of reminiscences at his tongue's end, and when, of necessity, he was the hero of his tale he spoke of his achievements in a modest way, as though it were an everyday occurrence to pass through the worst gale known on the lakes, and attempt to demolish a lighthouse with a vessel during that same storm by running his bowsprit through the building.

Archie liked to hear him talk, and in their relations in the future these two became fast friends.

He found that they had been talking the matter over before his arrival, and had, to all appearances, come to a conclusion concerning a departure.

"Can you be ready to start in the morning, Archie, if the wind shifts to-night?" asked Dick.

"Yes. Where away?"

"Jupiter Light. Then either Lake Worth or the Everglades," came the answer.



## CHAPTER XI

## SURROUNDED BY SHARKS.

Archie would have liked to have spent more time in this delightful spot, but the wishes of his two companions were law to him, so he spent the rest of the day in looking about the place.

When night came the norther was still howling down the river.

The wind was not a chilly one, the mercury marking sixty. They had advanced too far south to feel the cold now, although this same norther would probably be marked at least to the freezing point in Jacksonville. This was one consolation.

That night they all gathered in the office of the little house, and stories were the order of the hour. Many strange experiences were told which showed the perils of their past lives.

The old captain was requested to again tell of that night of storm on the lakes when his vessel had had the collision with the lighthouse. He did so, modestly, but his hearers could infer from what little he



said that upon him had fallen the full burden of the trials and sufferings of that night.

There was also one present who had seen much of life upon the sea.

He did not speak often, but was a good listener. Along the Florida coast he spent much time in shark fishing. No one seemed to know what there was so fascinating to him about the sport.

Generally anglers wish to catch a few sharks to say they have done it, but the effort is such hard work that they soon give it up and proceed to more gentle sport.

This white-haired old man, however, seemed to love it.

He carried with him great shark-hooks attached to strong chains and swivels, solid steel grains for spearing the fish, and a great assortment of lines, from a hawser to an ordinary-sized fishing line of Cuttyhunk.

It had been suggested that he might be in some peculiar business, such as securing shark oil from the dead fish for some purpose, just as they take it from porpoises for jewelers' use. Those who had watched



him fish, however, had seen that he only extracted a single tooth from each victim.

These were kept as trophies, marked with ink as to the time of capture, and if there was anything peculiar about the affair the particulars were jotted down in a big logbook.

No doubt that volume would have been very interesting reading.

When pressed by the others for a story, this gentleman, the Shark Hunter, as he was often called in sport, looked calmly around.

"I am tempted to tell you, gentlemen, the reason of my strange hatred for the pirate of the ocean—the shark," he said, with a gleam of humor in his eye.

One and all were delighted. So various had rumors become that a great deal of curiosity had been excited, and even ridiculous stories set afloat concerning his queer occupation, some asserting their belief that a man lived upon shark's flesh.

He was undoubtedly about to take advantage of this opportunity of setting himself right before the world.

When those present had hastened to assure him that such a story would be very agreeable to them,



the old gentleman, with a smile upon his face, leaned back in his chair and began:

"Some ten years ago I was aboard a vessel that sailed from New York for Havana. I was her captain, to tell you the truth.

"We had fair weather for quite a time after leaving New York, and soon rounded Hatteras without much trouble.

"This unusual good luck we paid up for later on, as you will see.

"One night it came on a hurricane, blowing great guns. It was such a storm as I had seldom met with in my twenty years of service along the coast, and came from the direction of the Windward Islands, that breeding place for cyclones and howlers.

"Our vessel was stanch but old, and we drove before the gale. Generally, these real cyclones seldom reach the Florida coast, it being about the extreme line of their circuit, as Captain Richards here can tell you, for he is on the lookout for them about August, and has a chart of their usual course.

"I soon learned that we were in a bad place, and there was a strong chance of our striking some one



of the numerous submerged reefs that abound in the neighborhood of the Florida keys.

"I am not much of a yarn spinner or I might describe the awful scene when we struck. It was at midnight. The worst of the cyclone had really passed over, and but for this catastrophe we would have gone through, with but the loss of our main-mast.

"Some of my men had been washed overboard, but there were seven besides myself still remaining. The schooner was heavily laden with such things as farming implements and machinery, so that she must soon sink, and the wild waves would dash over her.

"I knew the sea would soon go down, but it would be too late to save us.

"The vessel floated off the shoal and hope flashed into our hearts. Alas! when I made my way down below I found that already the vessel was settling, a great hole having been knocked in her bottom.

"She must sink inside of ten minutes, and our position seemed hopeless. The boats were either gone or knocked to pieces, and we could find no material for making a raft in that short time.



"Some of the men were for throwing themselves into the sea on a hatch, but I convinced five of them that it was our only chance to climb up into the rigging of the remaining mast.

"We had some show, for I believed the vessel in sinking would reach bottom and leave her broken spars out of water.

"Two of them threw a hatch overboard and leaped after it. One caught hold and the other was drowned in our sight. Hatch and sailor were swept away to leeward out of sight.

"We sprang into the rigging, and had just time to secure a hold up near the spar when the vessel went down with a moan like that of a drowning man.

"It was a fearful position, and only for the flashes of lightning we would have been in utter darkness. I prepared for death, and believed the chances of living through the night were about one in a thousand.

"As I had expected, the vessel reached the bottom, leaving part of her mast and spars above the surface.

"Here we lashed ourselves.

"If I should live to the age of Methuseleh I would



never forget the horror of that night. The heavy cargo of the schooner held her down, and unless the billows swept the mast entirely away, it was apt to stand for some time.

“Minutes seemed hours and hours weeks. The sea raged and the spray flew over us, for the shallow nature of the place caused the billows to break badly.

“Morning came. Only four of us saw it. The others had been washed away during the night.

“Through the livelong day we hung there, wet, weary and dispirited. Around us was solitude. Far away on one quarter we could see the low-lying keys, but the day passed without a single sail coming in sight.

“It was only a question of time as to when we should fall victims to the multitude of sharks that hovered in the neighborhood.

“Already they had feasted upon our unlucky companions, no doubt, and our fate seemed plain.

“Hour after hour dragged by.

“We were fascinated by the awful sight, and I felt my brain reel.

“One of the sailors became mad from the effect



of the exposure, his fear, and the awful doom awaiting us. I knew what was the matter when I saw him creeping stealthily toward me knife in hand. His eyes blazed with the fire of his brain, and there was murder in his glance.

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and, although death seemed so near and so positive, I made up my mind that I would not submit tamely.

"He crept up like a tiger. I had tied myself to the spar with a piece of rope which I had cut from the rigging.

"As he drew nearer I warned him to keep back, but he simply scowled. One would think it was his worst foe upon whom he was thus advancing instead of a friend.

"At last he sprang at me. The shock was terrible. I managed to clutch the mad sailor's arm so that the descending knife did me very little injury.

"As was natural, however, we both lost our footing and fell over. I felt a thrill of horror shoot through my frame, and expected to feel the teeth of a shark in my flesh, but the rope with which I had tied myself saved me. There I hung, my feet almost touching the water.



"I heard a human shriek, a bubbling cry of anguish, a swirl of the waters, and my very soul shrank with horror as I realized that the man had been torn to pieces by the hungry sharks.

"My turn might have come, too, only that I threw my arms up, and clasping the spar drew my body beyond danger. Even as I did this a monster made a snap at my dangling legs, his jaws coming together with a pistol-like report.

"By this time my companions had recovered enough to help me up.

"We were only three when the sun went down that evening, and it was doubtful whether any of us would answer to the muster roll by morning, for there seemed to be a chance of a storm in the air.

"By this time our finer senses had become dulled, so that even when in the dead of night I heard the awful cry, the splash and the rush of the monsters below that announced the death of another comrade, only a faint shudder came over me.

"Once more morning came. Two of us were left, but we had not eaten a bite for thirty-six hours, and were completely worn out with exhaustion.

"Below us those horrible monsters glided, pa-



tiently biding their time. Surely, they are the tigers of the sea—man-eaters.

“Eagerly did we scan the horizon as soon as the day had come, and far away we sighted a little column of black smoke upon the sky.

“That meant a steamer.

“Whether it had passed us in the night, or was coming the other way, was a question on which our lives depended, for if we lost this chance we might as well give up the struggle.

“I cannot tell you how eagerly we watched and waited. Finally we were overjoyed to see that the steamer was north-bound, and must pass within a few miles of us.

“We began to signal. Never in all my life have I passed such an hour. The thought that the steamer might go past and leave us to our fate was the most terrible anguish I ever experienced.

“Just when it all happened I do not know, but some time during this fearful experience my hair turned from black to white, just as you see it now.

“The steamer saw our signals and answered them. Coming slowly up, she lowered a boat, and at last we were safe.



"The sharks seemed to realize that they had been cheated out of their expected prey, for they showed it by even attacking the heavy yawl, but shots and harpoon-thrusts wounded so many that they turned their attention to fighting among themselves.

"That is my story, gentlemen. What I suffered has been too terrible to relate, at greater length, but from that day to this I have entertained a bitter hatred for sharks, and spend all my winter cruising in the South, where I can put in my time ridding the world of these voracious creatures."

"And from what I have heard you have put quite a number *hors de combat*," said Dick, quietly.

"A large hammer-head shark that I caught at Jupiter the other day made my list just one thousand seven hundred."

Archie studied the man. Here was a strange character, indeed. No doubt the events of that time of danger had slightly affected his mind. On all other subjects he was rational enough, but when the matter of fishing for sharks came up he was enthusiastic, or, as Jack said, "a crank."

They spent a very agreeable evening.

How strange to see summer flowers and many



night-blooming cereus at that, all about the room in this wintry time. One could hardly believe it was January.

Captain Richards pressed them to remain and go on a deer hunt.

The deer were scarce up above, for the Indians had cleared them out, but some might be found within five miles of Eden.

"How is that, captain?" asked Ned.

"Thereby hangs a true tale. Some years ago, during a terrible storm, some wretched Seminole braves came here and asked shelter. They were in a pitiable condition. We let them sleep in one of the boats, and fed them until the weather settled. When they were going off one of them came to me, and sweeping his hand back toward the pine woods said:

" 'Captain hunt deer?'

"I said I expected to later on, when I found time.

" 'Indian no hunt captain's deer,' said the fellow as he walked off.

"Very little in itself, but it meant much, for there has not been an Indian hunting within miles of Eden for three years. The fellow kept his word."



"Are there many of these Indians?"

"Several hundred of them. They are divided into about three groups, one down on the Miami, another deep in the Everglades, and the third further north. They make a detour to avoid Eden in coming and going."

"Then you don't fear an outbreak?"

"Outbreak! Nonsense."

"They are a peculiar people."

"Granted."

"And come of a warlike race."

"Oh! yes. Osceola and his braves made a desperate fight, you know."

"What if when I was out hunting I should meet one of these Seminoles?" continued Archie.

"Well?"

"What would he do?"

Captain Richards laughed.

"I'll tell you. If you should step up to him and say, 'Give me that gun,' the chances are ten to one he'd give it to you."

"What!"

"Why, so far as I have seen them, they are the most docile of people, fearful of doing anything to



arouse the anger of the whites, for they have sense enough to know that if war came this time it would be one of extermination for them."

"This is news to me."

"Captain, I have heard that they still have negro slaves in their village—the only slaves held in this country. How is it?"

"I have heard the same thing."

"Is it true?"

"Very possibly, but there are none among the Miami Indians, for I have seen their home."

"But it may be a fact among those deeper in the Everglades?"

"I could easily believe it."

Although the proprietor of Eden pressed them so hard to stay, it was thought best to sail in the morning if the breeze proved favorable, for the wind, in the north, might be too strong for navigating Hobe Sound with comfort—broad, treacherous water that it was.

If they did stay over they would accept his kind invitation for a hunt in the pines.

When Archie crawled into the *Sea Waif* at about ten, the wind was still in the north.



“Anchor out where you can have swinging room, Archie,” called Dick from his craft, “for I think it’s going to shift soon.”

In ten minutes the skipper of the *Sea Waif* was in the land of dreams.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE MOSQUITO FLEET AT JUPITER LIGHT.

About an hour after midnight Archie awoke.

He believed the wind was getting a better swing at his boat than before, and with a suspicion as to what this meant, poked his head out.

The sky was clear, the stars bright, and the wind due east. That was good.

"Halloo, *Sea Waif*!" said a quiet voice, and looking over to the *Bet* he could see the head of her skipper poking out of the bow end of the canoe tent.

"I see the wind's changed," said Archie.

"Yes."

"What were you up for?"

"Giving the *Bet* a little more line. The wind has a free sweep at us here, now that we are not protected by the bulkhead."

"Shall I do the same?"

"It is wise."

"No need of two anchors?"

"Bless your dear, timid heart, *Sea Waif*, no! This



is holding-ground totally unlike the affair up the river."

The floating weeds and sea grass catching on the cable held like fun, and nothing short of a tornado could have swept them off.

"We'll leave in the morning, Dick."

"If the breeze holds east, yes."

"I'm off to dreamland again, then."

"Ditto, when I've smoked this pipe."

Rocked in the cradle of the deep, Archie slept soundly and knew no more until, hearing voices on the landing, he looked out, to find the sun about to rise above the low-lying peninsula a mile and a half away, beyond which was the ocean.

As the wind still held east, it seemed settled that they would try and make Jupiter Inlet that day.

There is much routine work in cruising. This becomes more fatiguing in Florida waters, where as a general thing each cruiser must sleep and cook aboard his own craft, for the plain reason that so much of the shore is illy adapted for camping purposes.

Then the cheery camp-fire, where the burden of preparing meals is divided, making it a pleasure, the



social pipe and conversation, the jovial yarn-spinning—all these things are lost, and each man, lighting his little *flamme* force lamps, or battery of Florence lamp stoves, proceeds to cook his solitary repast and eat it alone.

Generally when the boats are close together pleasant badinage will be indulged in from time to time. Dick and Archie used to exchange ideas as to the all-absorbing question of meals, and it was a common thing to hear the former call:

“Ahoy, *Sea Waif*! What’ve you got good for supper?”

“Oh! I’ve got a stew of canned corned beef and succotash thickened with broken ship biscuit, and a kettle of rice with condensed milk and sugar in it. Bully, too! Now, I’m enjoying a cup of English breakfast tea. It goes right to the spot. What’ve you got, *Bet*?”

“I never saw a fellow get along so fast. My grub’s cooking yet. Let’s see. Here’s a hash of canned roast beef and Boston baked beans which I shall thicken with flour, a pot of hominy of which I’m very fond, and a pannikin of tea. I shall make out with some pilot bread, I reckon.”



It can be readily understood that the appetites of our cruisers, always good, became extraordinary at times. Their bill of fare was limited, but it was not variety they sought, only quantity.

Let us see what Archie had on board, in order to get an idea as to how they fared.

There were canned goods in the shape of condensed milk, pound cans of corned beef, corn, succotash, Boston baked beans, roast beef, chipped beef, and a few other things of like ilk. Then came a canvas bag holding some six pounds of ship bread, or pilot biscuit. There were also potatoes of two sorts, onions, oatmeal, flour, sugar, tea, coffee, rice and hominy. All but the first and second of these were kept in the mess chest of each boat. Besides these, there was a stick of bacon and some four or five pounds of pink salt pork. Down South the one is called breakfast bacon and the other bacon.

Butter was carried when possible, and if eggs could be procured they were generally placed in the tin boxes holding flour, oatmeal and hominy.

Thus it will be seen that the cruisers were in no danger of starvation.

They might have been away from civilization a



month and lived well, providing water could be obtained. This was hard to carry. The room was limited in a canoe, and, although the can stowed fairly well, it was forever in the way, often under one's feet.

It is one of the penalties of a salt-water cruise in a land where fresh water cannot be obtained all along the route. A trip through Long Island Sound, through the great South Bay, or along the Jersey coast would not necessitate any such arduous carriage.

They were now below the line of stores at which anything could be procured, the last being at Eden, and they would not meet with another until they reached Lake Worth.

Breakfast over, they bade good-by to the hospitable folks at Eden. Captain Richards and his family saw the Red Jackets off.

In their red shirts the skippers looked very picturesque that morning, the white sails of the boats catching the steady east wind and their sharp prows cutting the water of the river.

It was about nine o'clock when the canoe fleet left the dock at Eden.



The old captain had a boat which had been made by himself. It was larger than the others both in length and beam. Besides, she had a heavy centerboard and was yawl-rigged. The captain had no faith in the patent brass centerboards that shut up like a lady's fan, declaring them too flimsy for a cruiser.

Dick had mended his centerboard with the help of young Richards, so that the *Bet* was now in working order.

Archie had shown his boat to the captain, who had admired the hull but smiled at the rig. He promised at the first opportunity to remedy the serious defects in her sail, so that she would make up to windward as well as either of her companion boats.

So the mosquito fleet left Eden, and once more sailed out upon the waves of the Indian River.

The day was a lovely one and the breeze all that could be desired.

Under such a wind Archie easily held his own. The boats were kept well together for the sake of company. If one found himself going ahead because he received the benefit of some peculiar freak



in the wind he shortened sail and waited for the others to come up.

Ned led the way.

Dick had never been below Indian River Inlet before, so that this was new stamping ground to him also.

Waveland was passed about eleven o'clock. It lies about six miles south of Eden.

Dick and Archie were alongside, and the former consulting his map, said:

"Sixteen miles to Jupiter yet. If this wind holds out we'll get there by four."

"Will it last?"

"Give it up. Ordinarily, down here, an east wind is steady for days at a time, but we have seen no such breeze this season."

"It came steady enough from the southeast," said Archie, shaking his head.

"While we were crippled in that cove? Granted, and that would have been a glorious wind with which to have sailed to the Haulover Canal up above Titusville," laughed Dick.

"You are right there."

Jupiter Narrows required some care lest they



should get lost. The channel was blind at times, but Ned knew where he was heading, and the boys never once found him to make a serious mistake.

By nature Ned was jolly, and sitting in his boat or at the camp-fire, his voice—he had a good one, too, a baritone—could often be heard raised in some favorite song.

Most of those he sung were of the sea, but now and then he tuned up on some really pathetic ballad. Archie wondered when he listened to some of these whether Ned had not left some fair girl at home.

Dick, too, warmed up under the genial glow of the camp-fire and once in a while gave the company some shanty sailor song that in times past he had learned from an old tar, Captain Kendall, or "Tarpon," with whom he had made a canoe cruise from the lakes down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and along the gulf to Pensacola.

Thus it will be seen that where circumstances allowed of their sitting around a fire they passed a very enjoyable evening.

Dick's fears were not well founded, for at three



o'clock the breeze was still in the east and they had arrived within a few miles of Jupiter.

This made them all happy. They had been buffeted so much lately by adverse winds that a little good fortune came in very acceptably.

"Look!" cried Archie, suddenly, pointing ahead.

The others did so.

"That's Jupiter lighthouse," said Dick.

It could be plainly seen, being built upon a coquina rock elevation.

At four o'clock they came to a pause, making Ned a good prophet.

The canoes were drawn up on the smooth, white sand, and their skippers getting out, proceeded to stretch their legs.

"Well, here we are," said Ned.

"Right side up with care, too, thanks to your sagacious leadership, Ned."

"Bosh! Anybody with eyes could have done the same thing with this map."

Ned was modest. It was not every one that could sail by chart. To do so over unknown ground requires great sagacity. The eye must be



continually on the watch for signs, and suppositions have to be proved at the next available opportunity.

He had done his duty well.

From Jupiter Light on, there were no charts until Biscayne Bay was reached, so that this duty had now come to an end without the young pilot having made a single error.

Presently the smoke of a fire arose as Archie, camp ax in hand, started in to business.

The others also busied themselves in spreading a tent with the sails, for they intended spending some days here to enjoy the fine fishing, and they might as well experience the satisfaction of a permanent camp.

By the time these things had been accomplished the day was nearing its close, and it was too late to visit the lighthouse, which pleasure could be reserved until the morrow.

While they were at supper, however, they received a visitor. This was a gentleman who walked into camp; he had on leggins and a corduroy suit. His face was that of a gentleman sportsman, the eye keen and withal pleasant.

Our cruisers recognized him from description as



a gentleman who had left Captain Richards' place a day or two before their arrival, bound for Jupiter on a fishing trip. He was from Somerville, N. J., and had a companion along. They had come on to Jupiter in a small catboat belonging to Eden.

He was made welcome. In camp good-fellowship generally becomes the rule, and seldom are visitors received in anything but a friendly spirit.

This party proved to be good company, and knowing the fishing ground was able to give the skippers of the mosquito fleet valuable advice. Around them was the great wilderness. Beyond the inmates of the lighthouse, and those on board a couple of sharpies that had come in over the bar and were lying to, waiting for daylight ere attempting the passage of the Narrows. Probably not a human soul could have been found for miles around, unless it was some wandering alligator hunter in the vast tangle along the little river emptying into the Indian near Jupiter Inlet.

Breakfast was cooked in company, for it was a relief to be out of the boats.

The tide promised to be favorable in an hour, so



they busied themselves laying in a supply of live bait, after which each man embarked.

Soon the tide was rushing over the bar, and with it came multitudes of fish of a dozen varieties.

This was a new method of fishing to Archie Forbes. At first the excitement was immense. When he struck home there was a delicious uncertainty as to whether one was fast to a game fish or a ten-foot shark.

Ned described it exactly when he said it reminded him of the time when the labels washed off all his cans, and when he selected one at random there was an agony of suspense as to whether supper would consist of baked beans or peaches.

It was laborious work pulling the fish in when caught, too.

Playing them was utterly out of the question, for their antics would be sure to attract the attention of a shark, who would relieve the strain on the line by taking channel bass, hook and all—indeed, it was sometimes considered lucky to save the line.

Archie lost seven hooks, thirty feet of line, several sinkers, and cut his hands in a number of places.



True, he hauled in a hundred pounds of fish, but saved only one, having no use for the others.

Finally he quit and joined the others on the shore, they having given it up before.

Dick had been watching him.

"Well, what do you think of it!" he asked.

"The fishing is immense, but the sport—bah! Trout and bass in the clear streams of the North can never be compared to it."

Dick grunted.

"Glad to see you're so sensible. Still, this is a great country for ye cruiser."

Archie was ready to admit that—water there was in plenty, open water, when the North lay in winter's cold embrace, and many of the days were balmy enough to suit the most critical. Yes, Florida had charms that no other State could lay claim to, since California offers little opportunities to the midget cruiser.



## CHAPTER XIII.

HOW NED PROVED EQUAL TO AN EMERGENCY.

"If you want a fine view walk over to the tower and ask the keeper's permission to go up."

It was their friend of the night before who had said this, and they thought now was as good a chance as any to do this same thing.

The view was grand, indeed. They could see the open sea, the coast line both north and south, and even get a fine view of the Indian River for miles.

Looking into the interior they saw what appeared to be a wilderness of palmetto trees, saw grass and swamp land, where the smaller river wound its sinuous course—a fearful place to be lost in.

"There's the smoke from the Indian fires," said Ned, pointing north.

"It may come from the steamer, *Indian River*, landing at Eden."

"No. It is too heavy for that. The Indians are hunting up there. It is the time of year they do this."

"There's another smoke in the southwest, a thin



column. What does it come from, do you suppose?"

"Ah! that must be the mysterious smoke of the Everglades. No one has ever found out what it is."

"They have an idea?"

"All sorts of theories have been advanced, one even that there is the crater of an old volcano in the Everglades—a volcano that has in times past been pushed up out of the sea just above the level, and land formed around it. Learned men have even come here with the belief that they might solve the mystery attending the peculiar formation of Southern Florida, but if they thought to find a strata of ashes and lava beds I'm afraid they were sadly disappointed."

"What is the true theory?"

"About the formation of Florida?"

"Yes."

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"Undoubtedly the little insect that formed the coquina rock ages upon ages ago had much to do with it, as we can see now from the growth of the Keys, but beyond all question the currents of the ocean and gulf had much to do with it also."



"I have heard it said that long, long ago the St. Johns River was like the Indian River is to-day—a mere lagoon separated from the ocean by a strip of land, and with an inlet where Mayport now stands."

"For one I have never seen the theory disputed or proved untrue. These things are singular, and yet probably correct. The peninsula along the Indian River was once a series of reefs, which gradually filled in and formed land. Some time that will probably happen to those reefs lying a mile or so off the shore, and a second lagoon be formed. That will not occur in our day, however," laughed Dick.

"The springs here are of immense size. Isn't it strange where they come from in a land where there are no highlands?" said Archie.

"Yes, and some of the largest within a few miles of the coast, inland, are hardly above tidewater. They could float a man-of-war on some of these springs. It has puzzled me to tell where the duece the limpid water comes from."

"Oh, that's plain enough," said Archie, readily. "There can be but one explanation. The water comes from the nearest mountain range, probably away up in Georgia."



"It seems incredible."

"I can prove it. More than once springs have been found on the very summit of elevations around which for many miles lay a level plain. How did the water get there? It came from higher mountains, perhaps hundreds of miles away."

"I see. There was a connection between the two, and the law of nature forced the water as near its own level as it could get."

"Exactly. That is the only explanation that can be given. Depend upon it, you will find it the true one."

"See here, fellows!"

It was Ned who spoke. He had been looking south through his glass all this while. Business with him was always before pleasure.

"What is it, Ned?"

"We are bound for Lake Worth in a few days, and we had better be studying our course, for we have no charts, and it's a dangerous piece of business to run outside unless we get a west breeze and little surf."

They saw the wisdom of his words, and coming together proceeded to get all the information possible.



The lighthouse keeper appeared on the scene just then, and various questions were put to him which he answered to the best of his ability.

With the glass glimpses could be obtained of Lake Worth. Their worst trouble would, in all probability, be in crossing Lake Worth bar, for, as the creek connecting the lake with Jupiter was un-navigable just then, it was positively necessary that they make this outside run.

Of course they would not leave Jupiter except under favorable conditions, as they were not inclined to be foolhardy.

It was about ten miles to Lake Worth, over a fine stretch of beach, along which many walked who were passing from one place to the other.

When they had looked to their satisfaction and learned all about the machinery of the flash-light of Jupiter, the canoeists descended again and went back to camp.

Then Dick racked his brain in the endeavor to give the boys a fine fish dinner.

Variety was not lacking, and from the manner in which the tin platters were passed back for more



it was evident that Dick had excelled himself as to the cuisine.

"Who's for the beach?" asked Ned.

"I for one," replied Archie.

"Count me in unless the captain wishes to go. Then I'll keep camp; but the captain declared he felt lazy and would remain by the boats.

"Look out for a storm, boys. There's one brewing," he cautioned.

They fought their way through all obstacles, and finally came out upon the beach, where they found the breeze strong, and already the surf roaring loudly.

Archie gloried in this, and he ran about picking up quite a variety of marine curiosities for mementoes.

Ned did not demean himself.

"Wait until we get on the west coast, if we ever do, and you'll see shells that will make your eyes open. I sent home a whole barrel of them from Charlotte Harbor two years ago. Dozens of ships could be laden with them and the supply not be exhausted."



"Do you think we can get through the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee, Ned?" asked dubious Archie.

"I am sure of it. The water, I understand, is higher in the Everglades than it has been at this season for many years, and I have Colonel Medway's map with full directions. If he could do it in a twenty-foot skipjack, surely we may in our canoes."

"It will be a great undertaking."

"Oh! I don't know. We will know a good deal about Southern Florida when we are done, that's all."

Archie thought he had acquired half a dozen volumes of information already, but he was ready for more, being of a receptive nature.

It was grand to look out upon the sea when the mad waves were rolling in. The canoeists had put on their oilskins at the suggestion of the weather-wise captain, and now had good reason to feel glad of it, for the rain came down in bucketfuls.

Finally they returned to camp.

All was snug there.

The canoes had their tents pitched, and the old



captain had seen that all were buttoned down, so that not a drop of water had entered.

As the boats were in a sheltered nook, they felt no serious effect from the gale, which grew in violence as the day ended.

Ned pronounced it a "corker fresh from the bat," an expression that all understood, for he had long been connected with the famous Philadelphia League baseball team under the veteran, Harry Wright.

The shore tent had to be changed somewhat to suit the gale. After all, Archie and Dick decided to pass the night in their boats, preferring the comfort there to a crowded shelter tent, so the latter was left to the other couple.

The *Sea Waif* and the *Bet* were hauled out from the shore and doubly anchored with room to swing in.

By this time Archie had become used to sleeping in his canoe. He enjoyed the rocking of the little craft, although haunted now and then during a gale by the memory of that sudden awakening and alarm up at the mouth of the St. Sebastian.



He slept like a log, and when he awoke it was morning.

The storm had gone down, the sky was clear, but the wind still holding in the east and southeast, they could not have gone out over the bar, even had they been dreaming of such a thing.

More fishing with the flood tide and no lack of fun. Archie caught a shark and held him until a bullet entered the monster's brain, and he was beached. He thought of their acquaintance at Eden when he gazed upon the monster, and took a tooth as a trophy of his capture.

His next adventure was with a sawfish, and it proved so dangerous that he did not care to try for these aggressive monsters any longer.

A blow upon the long snout paralyzed the sawfish just as he was about to demolish the *Sea Waif* in a hurry.

They landed sheepshead, channel-bass, groupers, drumfish, crevalle, cavallia and other species of salt-water fish *ad finitum*.

Even Archie, with the spirit of angling as strong within him as ever it grew in the breast of an ardent devotee of the sport, wearied of such work.



He did not call it sport, but slaughter.

"I never went in for quantity," he said. "Up at Greenwood Lake, in New York State, made famous by Frank Forrester's sporting stories of 'Warwick Woodlands,' you remember, I enjoyed a day in my little cedar boat with the utmost zest, and never caught a fish. To me the surroundings are nine-tenths of the sport in angling."

"Well, what do you think of your surroundings here?" asked Dick.

Archie looked about him and shrugged his shoulders, at which both of the others laughed, for, like most sportsmen who have read up Florida for years, he found much room for disappointment in the real thing.

True, the fish, the game—everything was there that he had expected, and yet his surroundings were so different that he could not enjoy them with the zest anticipated.

"If we could unite this air and these fish with our Northern scenery—ah! then we'd have something to talk about."

So many a sportsman has said, as, sweltering in the heat of a hot day, he looked down upon his pile



of game, his mind wandering back to scenes far different from the quagmires with which he was surrounded.

The boys took a trip up the little river and found a wilderness. It was the best glimpse Archie had had of lovely Florida.

Pushing ahead of the others under paddle alone, he passed under overhanging trees and surprised dozens of aquatic birds. Herons and cranes, blue and white, stalked along in the shallow water near the shore in search of the fish they fed upon, it being apparently the one issue of life with them to eat.

They took wing as Archie appeared upon the scene, their long legs sticking out behind like a fishing pole. Other birds were seen, some of which were of beautiful plumage.

Alligators were plentiful, for down here they were out of the reach of the general tourist, who only went in certain lines of travel.

Archie surprised many a sleeping fellow lying on a log by giving him a prod with his paddle, and laughed to witness the unseemly haste with which



the reptile tumbled off his sunning spot into the water.

Water-moccasins could be seen, too, their yellow folds flashing through the dark water of the river.

These things become tiresome, especially when the adventurous explorer is constantly surrounded by a cloud of sand flies, and his face and neck burning as though he had applied a mustard plaster.

So they turned back, anxious to get to salt water again.

Here they could breathe more easily. There was a bracing richness in the breeze and salty air that invigorated them.

If they carried out their original plans and crossed to the gulf coast they would see all they wanted of the interior. Better enjoy the coast while they could.

On the way back Ned suddenly snatched up his Winchester.

They saw him take a quick aim and fire. Then came a tremendous shriek as of a demon. A dark body sprang through the air and alighted upon the forward deck of the *Sachem*.

Archie had just time to see a pair of yellow



gleaming orbs in the bristling mass of hair and realize that it was a wounded wildcat, when again Ned's rifle rang out.

The animal was blown from the deck of the canoe into the water, where it gave a few last spasmodic kicks. Ned drew it to him with his paddle and laid it on his deck.

"I've ruined the skin, for which I'm sorry, as I would have been glad to have kept it," he said, apologetically.

Wildcats and panthers are to be met in the woods of Florida. They generally frequent dark ravines in the daytime, while the deer are in the open woods.

In times past bear have been very plenty.

They are hunted in the spring, as it is easier to get them then.

One of Captain Richards' neighbors explained to Archie their manner of lying for bruin.

It seems that the black bear has a great weakness for turtle eggs, just as in other countries he has for honey. During the spring, at the time the green and loggerhead turtles come up on the beach to deposit their eggs, the hunter secretes himself in



the bushes at a point where he can command a view of the shore.

A moonlight night is taken if possible, although a reflection lantern may be used to advantage on a dark night.

Presently along comes the bear, on the lookout for his supper. Instead he receives a deadly shot from the bushes. More than once, only wounded, he has been known to rush forward on his prey, and a deadly struggle ensue on the beach.

It is a novel method of ambushing bears, and like success in all a woodsman's craft could only have been discovered by a close study of the animal's peculiar ways.

The season of the year was not propitious for such work, but perhaps by the time they made the west coast it might be tried. Archie was determined to take a bearskin home with him, however, in case the opportunity offered.

They arrived at camp before sundown, and now awaited a west wind and clear sky ere attempting the dangerous outside run.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE OUTSIDE PASSAGE TO LAKE WORTH.

Two days passed.

They were all that could be desired in themselves, with fair skies and a pleasant breeze. Still, it was no canoe weather over the bar at Jupiter.

Such a run, although short, was extremely dangerous. There would probably be a certain amount of surf, caused by the tide rolling over the shallows, and to avoid this wash they must go about half a mile out, and then keep down the coast.

At last the time came.

They were electrified to hear the old captain declare that all things were as favorable as could be expected. True, there was some surf over the bar, but this only afforded a chance for a lovely little run.

Young fellows with such natures as theirs naturally love excitement, and here was an opportunity.

Everything was made ready.

Archie may have been full of suppressed excite-



ment, but he did not show any sign of it either in looks or actions. Systematically he prepared the *Sea Waif* for her first run outside. They would have more of it if they concluded to go on to Biscayne Bay so as to ascend the Miami River. It was just as well to prepare for emergencies.

"All ready?" cried Ned.

"Ay, ay!" called the others.

"Then up anchors and away."

It had been arranged that they were to go two abreast, for several reasons, the principal of which was the fact that they might be able to be of assistance to each other in case of accident.

Archie and Dick brought up the rear.

The *Sea Waif* having had her rig completely altered by the old lake captain, now worked beautifully, and her skipper had been charmed by the way she made up into the eye of the wind.

He could lay his course nearer the wind than any of his companions, and hence the remark of the captain to the effect that properly rigged the boat would outpoint any of their craft, was realized.

Just now, however, this did not matter one iota. Her weatherly qualities were what would save her



skipper from a ducking, added, of course, to his good seamanship.

The four little craft of the mosquito fleet went over the bar in gallant style. Archie found the *Sea Waif* rushing through the seething, tumbling water. How big the waves seemed, now that he was among them.

He could hear a trumpet blown from the lighthouse, as if to encourage them, and was the only one who got hold of his battered horn to send back a response.

For a brief space of time he was in the midst of foaming waters. They even washed his deck, but the coaming around the cockpit and the canvas apron he had drawn about him, prevented any drops from entering the boat.

Then he passed beyond. His boat still rose and fell upon the rollers, but he had gone beyond the bar.

All were safe.

The wind was in the northwest and blowing a gentle sailing breeze. Things could not have been more propitious, and yet all of them had experienced the



sudden changes in Florida weather, and knew that these things might not be depended on.

In ten minutes, with a change of tide the wind might pass to the north and then east, kicking up a terrible sea, in which such diminutive craft would have small chances for living.

Under such distressing circumstances they had already formed their plans.

They would take no chances. As soon as the wind veered to east of north, and without waiting for the sea to come up, they would turn their boats toward the shore and beach them.

The canoes could be carried beyond the reach of the waves, and a camp made back in the scrub, where they could await a favorable turn in the wind ere continuing their voyage to Lake Worth.

It was well to provide for emergencies, even though such occasions might not arise.

The wind remained west of north, and they had a delightful run of ten miles or so.

Archie enjoyed it perhaps more because it was his first canoe trip outside, and there was a tingling of the nerves, produced by excitement, while the



voyage lasted, to think of such mere cockle-shells upon the heaving bosom of the mighty ocean.

Finally they sighted Lake Worth Inlet.

The observations taken from the lighthouse tower at Jupiter and the directions obtained from the keeper were now valuable, and they ran the bar neatly, for their craft drew very little water.

All of them kept well to the south in making the inlet, as is habitual along the coast, as the bar makes out from the northern end. To be plainer, when approaching from the north it is well to thoroughly "open" the inlet before attempting to enter. The same can be applied to the St. Sebastian and other streams emptying into the Indian River, the bar always lying to the north.

The quartette of cruisers passed over the bar in fine style. This inlet had been made by the settlers themselves, for it was not a great many years ago that Lake Worth was a fresh-water lake, fed by small streams and water from the swamps. Now it is a fine sheet of salt water, with all the fish to be found at the inlets, and even oysters at one end.

The inlet is near the upper end. Here the water is more shallow than further down, and one has to



be careful when his boat draws more than a foot, for stumps and other impediments to navigation abound, so the canoeists had been told, although they did not discover these things by experience.

They sailed down the lake and soon drew up on the western shore.

Their appearance was greeted with cheers on the part of the hospitable people, who wondered to look upon such dainty and small craft. Sharpies and shipjacks they were accustomed to see enter the lake, for these boats possess weatherly qualities that make them safe even in bad weather outside the bar, but never before had four little canoes braved the perils of the deep and come sailing down the lake flying their club token, and the burgee of the A. C. A.

Our young friends made themselves quite at home—indeed, so hospitable were the good people of Lake Worth they could not well have done otherwise.

Nothing was refused them. Presents of fruits and vegetables were forced upon them from all sides, and Dick declared they would have to leave Lake Worth or be spoiled.



Their evenings around the camp-fire were jolly ones.

They had many visitors, many of them ladies, and until late in the night both Dick and Ned were kept busy singing their songs, the whole party joining in the chorus.

The favorite with all was probably "White Wings," which Ned's baritone rendered in a striking manner, and the chorus rolled grandly over the water; but there was a deep interest maintained in Dick's shanty, which, from the recollections associated with it of pleasant camp-fires and still more pleasant company, I give here *verbatim*.

He called it

#### OLD MOHEA.

Once more with flowing northerly gales  
We're bounding o'er the main,  
Those verdant hills of the tropic isles  
We soon shall see again.  
Five sluggish moons have waxed and waned  
Since from those shores sailed we,  
But now we're bound from the Arctic ground,  
Rolling down to the old Mohea.

#### CHORUS.

Rolling down to old Mohea, my boys,  
Rolling down to old Mohea.  
We're once more bound from the Arctic ground,  
Rolling down to old Mohea.



Thro' many a blow of rain and snow  
 And bitter squall of hail,  
 When masts were bent and canvas rent,  
 We braved the Northern gale.  
 Those snowy piles of ice-girt isles  
 That deck the Arctic sea  
 Are many and many a league astern,  
 As we steer for old Mohea.

CHORUS.

Thro' vapors' dawn with the rising sun  
 Old "Niger" rolls away,  
 Or sleeps in the mist, by moonbeams kissed,  
 On the waves of St. Lawrence Bay:  
 For many a day we have toiled away  
 On that wild Kamtchatka Sea,  
 And as we toiled we chatted and sung  
 Of the girls of old Mohea.

CHORUS.

Up thro' the land where the iceberg looms.  
 Up thro' the wastes of snow,  
 With rigging and sail all coated with ice  
 When the bitter blasts do blow;  
 With a hurricane on our weather-bow  
 And breakers on our lee,  
 It seemed the blast, as it whistled past,  
 Brought tidings from old Mohea.

CHORUS.

Oh! I love that land, with its fragrant breeze,  
 Its odors fresh and rare,  
 Its verdant glades and sunny maids  
 That are ever kind and fair.  
 There even now bright eyes look forth  
 Each day in hopes to see  
 Our snow-white sail before the gale  
 Rolling down to old Mohea.

CHORUS.



An ample share of toil and wear  
We seamen undergo,  
But when it's o'er what do we care  
How hard the blast may blow?  
For homeward bound is a joyful sound,  
Though as yet it may not be—  
But we'll think of that as we laugh and chat  
With the girls of old Mohea.

## CHORUS.

No song of the sea ever sounds one-half as full of melody sung in a parlor or concert room as out upon the water or when a party of jolly spirits are gathered around a camp-fire.

There is a charm and melody to the stirring words, an enchantment that hangs upon one until the last quivering note dies away in the woods and over the water, followed by the intense silence of Nature. None but those who have been there can appreciate this truth.

They had a chance while at Lake Worth to go on several hunts.

The captain got his deer, shooting the little buck straight through the heart. It was while out on this trip that Archie had an experience he was apt to remember.

While crossing a stretch of country in order to



reach a ravine where he had been given to understand there was a chance of finding either deer or turkeys he accidentally trod upon a small rattler.

Like a flash the reptile had struck at him, and Archie received such a shock as he had never before experienced. Nevertheless he retained his presence of mind, and with one terrific kick he sent the reptile flying.

Before it could recover from the stunning force with which it had brought up against a tree near by he placed his gun close to its head, and with the report the rattler's head was blown to atoms.

With trembling hands Archie unbuckled his leather leggins—every Florida sportsman ought to wear leggins as a protection against snakes and thorns, though heavy knee-boots are about as good, if cumbersome.

Heaven was kind. At the very point where the snake's fangs had struck, his pants had been doubled over, making three thicknesses, besides drawers and leather leggins. There was not the faintest scratch upon his leg.

Archie breathed a prayer of thanks. The encounter made him extremely nervous for a day or



two. If anything touched him, however accidentally, he would give a start as though shot.

And yet he did not turn back, but kept on his way to the ravine, although he walked as if on eggs, and his eyes were more on the lookout for snakes than turkeys.

Luck was with him, for he came upon a handsome gobbler, which had answered his "call," and when Archie let him have one of his buckshot cartridges, the distance being fully a hundred yards, Mr. Turkey yielded himself a "prisoner, rescue or no rescue."

Retracing his steps, he took the dead rattler also into camp. The boys declared he had had a very narrow escape, and Ned assisted him to skin the reptile.

"Some time when you wear a pair of slippers made out of that same skin, and are toasting your shins before a comfortable grate fire, while the cold wintry wind roars outside, you will remember all we passed through down here, and feel a pang of pity for such cruisers as we of the old Red Jacket Club."

They all laughed at Ned's words.

Nevertheless the incident was impressed on their



minds, and they felt that from this time on they would have to be more careful how they tramped the jungle where so many hidden perils lurked.

The days passed pleasantly, and the evenings were one round of amusement, for around a roaring camp-fire, with the canoes pulled up on the shore, they sang and joked, and listened to the captain's droll yarns of past experience, until the waning stars warned them that it was time to seek their couches.

Dick, from force of habit, persisted in sleeping aboard the *Bet* each night, but the others took to the tent shelter, such as it was, and in front of which burned their fire.

They soon came to the end of their stay, and began to get ready for the still more perilous outside passage to Biscayne Bay.

Archie had learned all he could at the lake, and was ready to go on.

It would be their last outside trip. If they reached this place in safety, they meant to ascend the Miami River, and by means of the map possessed by the party, cross the Everglades to Lake Okeechobee, an amazingly bold enterprise for such diminutive craft.



There was an unpleasant feature to the case—the chance of losing themselves in that great wilderness. They looked at such a possibility with calm deliberation, and were not alarmed.

When there seemed to be a prospect of the wind shifting to the west or northwest, according to the signs read by the old captain, they bade their good friends farewell, and accompanied by their best wishes, set sail.

Arriving near the inlet, they found that the time was not propitious for crossing, and hence came to anchor.

About ten o'clock the tide was full. With it came a calm. Then the wind began to pull out of the northwest.

This suited them beautifully, and they made the run over the bar in gallant style.

They were not alone. A sharpie owned by Charlie Moore accompanied them, being bound also for Biscayne Bay, with two men aboard.

There was now a run of some hours before them, the dangers of which were not to be treated lightly. Going to sea in a canoe only thirty-one inches beam by fifteen feet in length, is not the safest thing in the



world, especially along the Florida shore, where the wind is changeable to an extraordinary degree.

Archie's nerves were strung to their highest point, but he sat his boat like a veteran and kept along with the other cruisers.



## CHAPTER XV.

## BEACHING THE SEA WAIF THROUGH THE SURF.

The wind was strong. It came from the northwest, and being very favorable, once they had crossed the bar and were out upon the open sea, bowled them along at a merry rate.

At times the canoes rolled somewhat, but on the whole they made remarkable time, and were soon putting miles behind them.

Noon came.

It found the little fleet still flying down the coast. Archie was near his friend Dick, but they only called out a few words now and then.

Would the wind hold out long enough to take them to the Hillsboro'?

This was a question of the greatest importance, since it was to be by all odds the longest run they would have outside, being some forty miles, a distance they had never yet made in a day.

As the hours passed on, however, they began to believe that after all they were destined to be fa-



vored. The breeze had sent them a score of miles on their way.

At about one o'clock they sighted a building on the shore.

This was House of Refuge No. 3.

Archie had seen No. 1, not far from Sebastian, on the strip of land between the Indian River and the sea. No. 2 was situated about opposite Waveland, at Gilbert's bar, just below where the new Santa Lucia inlet has of more recent years been opened through the enterprise of the pineapple growers along the coast. Here shipwrecked mariners could be taken care of in their time of trouble.

The favorable breeze still held out, and they began to hope that the whole forty miles would be made without trouble.

The old captain looked over his shoulder pretty often, and it was evident that he at least had some fears of a change. There were perhaps ten miles to be sailed, and it was two o'clock in the afternoon.

Archie all at once became aware that his progress had changed—he was no longer making such fast time.

When he turned to the others he found they were



at his side. Then it must be that the wind was slacking.

That was rather a singular thing at this time of the day, and might mean much, especially as a low bank of clouds seemed to be gathering along the horizon.

Did this mean a storm?

In spite of his fortitude and bravery, Archie felt a thrill of alarm at the prospect. To be caught outside in a gale meant sure destruction.

He had loved ones at home, and his mind often turned to them. For their sakes he had promised himself not to take any risks that could well be avoided.

And yet Archie was not the one to speak at a time like this. Had he been alone, he would have headed at once for the shore and beached his boat, drawing the little craft far up beyond the reach of the waves. While in the company of his fellow-cruisers no word of alarm from him would be uttered that could swerve them in any choice of movement.

From certain short talks he heard pass between his companions he realized that they were debating



the chances they had of reaching Hillsboro' Inlet before the storm came or the wind died out.

From what he heard, he made up his mind that the chances were about even, and this was not a very encouraging prospect.

Meanwhile the breeze was slowly but surely dying out. Their progress became slower and slower, until they rolled upon the swell with hardly any perceptible headway.

This looked serious.

They were still several miles from their destination. What was to be done?

As veteran canoeists, Ned and Dick did not have to ask that question twice.

They must start what is sometimes known as a "spruce breeze."

Out came the paddles.

The sharpie seemed to catch some breeze away up near the tops of her tall masts, and was half a mile ahead, making very good time down the coast.

Under this new influence the mosquito fleet began to move again. All they hoped for now was that the wind would hold off. If it was going to be unfavorable when it came, far better that it kept away.



They worked like Trojans, but in their excitement seemed to move like snails.

The air began to thicken, as though flying mist had descended. With this there sprang up a breeze, but it was northwest.

At the same time the low-lying clouds along the horizon began to come up. The storm was approaching.

It now became intensely interesting, for between the two possible results it seemed nip and tuck. Would they make the inlet or be swamped?

Archie thought their chances were very small. He would have been willing to have tossed up a penny and abide by the result, for with the rising wind the sea became rough and the little craft were washed about like corks in a gale.

In spite of this they hoisted sail, reefed of course, and moved on, with constantly increasing momentum, until presently it seemed to promise a race for life; for the boats were half under part of the time, and their skippers hanging out well to windward.

At times they even lost sight of each other, and the sharpie had long since passed beyond their range of vision.



They had arranged beforehand a code of signals. Dick was to give them, or Ned if he chanced to be in advance.

Archie was comparatively alone, for he had only seen his companions once in the last five minutes, when he chanced to be on the top of a billow at the same time as they were.

Was it of any use for him to keep on?

He could not know when they were opposite Hillsboro River Inlet, and hence he might even pass it.

Besides, the wind was constantly rising, and the sea becoming more boisterous with each passing minute. Ere long it would be fully as dangerous to attempt to beach the canoe as to stay out where he now was and outlast the storm.

What then?

Evidently the *Sea Waif* must go ashore.

No more time must be lost in following a hopeless game, but he must beach the canoe while there still remained a chance of doing so with some show of success.

He had hardly made up his mind to this and was recalling all the directions that had been given him for use at such a trying time—for Archie had never



yet beached a canoe through the surf—when he caught a strange sound.

It came back from leeward, and seemed for all the world like the braying of a donkey.

Archie knew that sound.

It was Dick's battered fog horn—whenever he wished to introduce a new key he was wont to hammer the poor old thing upon the gunwale of the canoe.

The racket was answered by Ned with two blasts, while Archie signified that he heard and understood by sending three blasts to leeward, and presently the captain was heard from.

The signaling was intended to inform them all that to continue on was useless. Each daring canoeist was expected to stow his sail, head his boat for the shore, and paddle the best he knew how.

Archie thrilled with the thought. The danger was greater, staying out half a mile from the shore, as an upset meant death, but the excitement of going in on a giant roller was something to stir the blood.

To stow his sail was the first job, and he found it a difficult one.



He was wet through with the spray, but had not dared to don his oilskins, for fear of finding them heavy in case of being thrown out of his boat.

The sail was finally secured, although he had two nasty seas strike him that came very near causing a capsize. His double paddle was handy, and he picked it up. To turn the *Sea Waif* shoreward was easily accomplished, and then he began to use the paddle vigorously.

No longer was he rolling in the trough of the sea, but after dipping and rising upon a huge billow, he started in.

Talk about your toboggan-ride—its excitement could never equal that of riding a giant roller in a frail cedar canoe.

With incredible swiftness Archie shot toward the beach. He could see everything now—the beach, the surf, and his intended course. Would he pass along it in safety? That could only be told by experience.

Even at such a time Archie had found a chance to cast a swift glance around him, and he smiled to see the whole three of his companions riding a white-maned horse in the race for the beach.



There was no time to see more, for the *Sea Waif* had reached the spot where the surf began.

All around him Archie saw the water bubbling and boiling and frothing. He set his teeth hard and went at it.

By this time he had found out how to manipulate the boat in order to keep upon the crest of the wave. The tendency was to fall behind, and had this been done he would have been swamped by that monster following so closely in his rear.

A roaring filled his ears. He paddled as though in a race, every muscle being exerted, his eyes on the watch to observe everything.

The speed with which he was hurried through this whirlpool of waters was really astonishing, and yet though the time that passed could be counted by seconds, to him it was ages, and he remembered every little incident as plainly as though it had been indelibly stamped upon his mind.

Dipping his paddle in deep, he urged the gallant little bark on.

Thus far all had been well. Now came the really dangerous part of the trip, for around him were foamy waters. A confused roaring was in his ears



—it seemed as though he were mounted upon a huge tidal wave and being borne through a mill race.

This could not last forever.

The bubbling and rushing sound gave way to others, and he knew he was nearing the beach, when his tactics must be changed.

Water had swept his deck, but the canvas apron drawn closely around him had saved him from being swamped, for this would surely have happened in the midst of that boiling sea.

Onward he was borne.

The billow upon whose snowy crest he had ridden into the surf carried him up far along the beach. When he found that he could touch bottom with his paddle he sprung out of the boat, and seizing hold of the foremast drew the *Sea Waif* up beyond the reach of the next billow.

Hurrah! He had accomplished the task in safety. The *Sea Waif* was beached!

Archie now recovered his breath and turned to discover how his comrades fared.

The captain was near him, tugging at his boat, which, being heavier than the others, was harder to beach.



Archie ran to help him

Just then he saw Ned some distance below and working the *Sachem* up on the sand.

Between them they got the captain's boat high up beyond the water's reach.

Where was Dick?

Could it be possible that he had met with an accident? Such things will happen to the best of men, whether veteran canoeists or novices. The turn of a wrist may bring about a catastrophe, or avoid it, and at such times as these the mind has to think like a flash and the hand be quick to obey.

Still none of them could believe Dick had been swamped.

Anxiously they looked up and down the shore where the wild waves were breaking, and then a welcome sound broke upon their ears. It was the toot-toot of Dick's fog horn.

"There he comes!" laughed Ned.

Looking out, Archie saw the gallant *Bet* sweeping in upon the crest of a billow larger than any that had preceded it. Just like Dick to wait for such a monster.

Archie fairly held his breath as he watched his



friend come in. Dick sprang overboard at the right moment and speedily snatched the faithful *Bet* from the jaws of the hungry waters.

"Hip, hip, hurrah! All safe!" he called.

"Everything is lovely."

"And the goose hangs high."

They now proceeded to lift the boats one at a time, and carry them to a point where the waves could never reach them, after performing which duty they found time to look around and see what manner of place they had reached.

It did not differ in any material respect from other spots with which they had become familiar. There were palmetto trees back of the beach, and under these they could make a camp.

Perhaps an hour still remained of daylight, and working with a will they got their camp in order. None too soon were the boats carried up and tilted over to form a shield against the wind, with the canvas and sails fastened so as to shelter them from the rain.

The storm came howling down, and with it the rain. In torrents fell the latter, but our cruisers had taken time by the forelock. Their tent being cov-



ered with rubber blankets, did not leak a drop, and even the wind was kept out fairly well, so that it was very comfortable.

The canoes were also close at hand, and arranged so as to form a wind-break.

Some trouble being experienced in keeping a fire for the heavy rain that fell, they banked it down and sheltered it from the dripping water, so that it could be resuscitated later.

This placed their supper in jeopardy, and hence Archie, clad in his oilskins, brought a little *flamme* force lamp to the rescue.

In one way or another they managed to get enough to eat, but it was trying work.

There are always some such occasions that arise during a trip. Good cruisers and companions tide over these difficulties with laughter and much joking. At times a joke is the best tonic a man can take. That is why camping out agrees so well with most fellows. They are forced to be congenial, and cannot get alone to brood over business, with its many troubles.

Meanwhile the storm raged furiously.

Later on they donned oilskins and went to the



beach to look out upon the raging ocean. It was a sight such as Archie would not likely soon forget. Flashes of lightning illumined the picture, and away out could be seen the tumultuous waste of tossing waters, foam-crested and lashed by the fury of the tempest.

How terrible they looked! Upon that heaving sea their canoes could not have lived five minutes, and it would have been only short of a miracle to reach the beach with them except in splinters.

Lucky indeed were they to have come ashore at the proper time.

"Look! Was that a vessel?" shouted Ned.

He pointed far out, and with the next flash they strained their eyes to see.

A spectre bark could be faintly distinguished running under bare poles for the south. Then the gloom hid her. When the electric fluid again illumined the scene they looked for her in vain. Some curtain of mist had swallowed the vessel, and she had vanished as completely as though engulfed in old ocean's maw.

After enjoying the strange sight and watching the huge billows hurl themselves upon the beach with



the force of tremendous machinery, so that one had to shout in order to be heard above the din, they concluded to return to camp and make all snug for the night.

There was a prospect of the storm being a short-lived one.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## BRUIN RECEIVES A WARM RECEPTION.

An hour later Archie discovered that the rain had ceased. The wind still continued but the clouds had been riven, and the bright stars peeped forth.

The storm was over.

They passed the night comfortably, all things considered, being old enough campaigners, and up to the many little tricks that come into play on such occasions. Besides, they were possessed of the philosophical spirit that takes things just as they come and makes no complaint.

The fire was easily resuscitated, and before its cheerful blaze they chatted and told yarns of past adventures.

Strange things some of them had seen, and such stories always lose half their flavor when told away from the camp-fire's ruddy glow.

They had been wise enough to save quite a supply of dry pine knots, and some of these pitched upon the fire made a flame that, for intensity of light and



heat, Archie had never seen equaled. This Southern pine beats the world for firewood, its only bad quality being smoke.

Thus the night passed away.

Morning broke bright and clear. The wind still held from the east, and the surf was running very high.

There was no possibility of launching their boats upon such a sea, and it would probably be some days ere they could do so. Much as they disliked the necessity of this inaction, they could not help it.

Ned sat down to examine his map of the region to see where they were stranded. Suddenly the others heard him give utterance to a loud cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick.

"Matter enough. Come here."

They gathered around him.

"You remember this small creek just back of the palmettos yonder, which we were surprised to see so close to the beach?"

"Yes."

"I have discovered beyond a doubt that it is a tributary to the Hillsboro' River, and that by launching



our boats on it we can paddle or sail down to the river, regardless of the wind or the surf outside."

"Hurrah for the inside passage!"

They followed Ned upon the map. There could be no mistake. He proved to them, first of all, just where they were, and this was done so as to dispel every doubt.

Then he followed the line of the stream just beyond the hommock until it joined the river.

"That settles it."

"Yes. Who made that map, Ned?"

"I got it from a gentleman at Lake Worth. He said he had surveyed this region thoroughly with a view to using the information some day in selling it to the Government, as a chart had never been made of this section of coast; but had given up the idea."

"It is presumably correct, then."

"He declared it to be accurate."

"We will have to trust to him."

"Yes. Fellows, now for a portage."

The distance was short, and they carried all their duffle over first, after which came the boats.

When the latter had all been launched upon the dark waters of the creek, the cruisers began to pack



again. Knowing just exactly where every article went by this time, they experienced little trouble in stowing things away.

Then lunch was the order of the day, in which all took a hand. A stew soon sent its savory odor up among the palmetto leaves. Archie attended to the coffee, and opened another can of milk, while Dick toasted some bread brought from the lake.

At half-past twelve all was finished.

“All aboard!” cried Dick.

Three minutes later the mosquito fleet was moving down the creek. It was too narrow to use sails, and the spruce, single-blade paddle was brought into play.

As they proceeded the creek became rapidly wider, after the manner of most Florida streams, until quite a fine breeze ruffled the water. Unable to stand it any longer, they raised their bunting and stood down the water course.

It was devious in its course and took them some distance from the coast, but, as long as the wind remained favorable, they cared naught for this.

Finally those in the lead gave a shout. The



others understood that the Hillsboro' was at hand, and in five minutes they were floating on its bosom.

Plainly they could hear the boom of the surf, but the white-caps were out of sight.

"This is what I call luck," said Archie, enthusiastically.

"It is a thousand times better than hanging out upon the coast there, where we got that searching wind," answered Ned.

They were one and all ready to acknowledge this. Being far enough from the coast line the trees broke the force of that keen wind rushing in from the northeast, and rendered their position comfortable.

They paddled along until the position they wanted was discovered, when they drew the boats upon the shore and proceeded to make a new camp.

In this way the balance of the day was passed, but what cared they? The sun was warm, and they felt comfortable.

Archie, seized with a desire to fish, got his heavy bass tackle in readiness. Then, entering the little dinghy which the captain towed behind his boat—a seven-foot Douglass folding canoe—he paddled along the river.



Presently he had a strike, for he was trolling a Hill spoon made for the purpose of Florida fishing. Then came a short tussle, which ended with his using the gaff and landing an eight-pound, big-mouth bass. A little further and he took in a second one out of the wet.

He had not started out to troll, however, and, as the evening was now close at hand, he changed the spoon for a single fly—a coachman.

With this he cast over the shallow places and wherever he thought it likely the bass would be in hiding.

They did not take to it very well, and he only secured one—a small fellow.

Then Archie thought of a plan that had been used in Florida more than a hundred years to lure the bass, but which seems as taking to-day as in the times of Ponce de Leon or any other ancient worthy who might, after a fashion, have tried its alluring qualities.

He took out a peculiar-looking object.

This was nothing more nor less than a set of three stout hooks soldered together back to back, and



then concealed in a bunch of gaudy feathers, and hair from a deer.

The triple hook was fastened to a stout piece of cord about three feet in length, and the other end of this secured to a long pole which Archie cut, not caring to use his bass rod for such a purpose.

Selecting a place where tall reeds and grass grew along near the shore, he glided in his little dinghy and began "bobbing," as this style of fishing is known down South.

The bunch of hair and feathers was allowed to touch the surface of the water now and then with a light, skipping movement.

Then the bass, hiding among the reeds and lying in wait for his prey, would rush out and make a leap above the surface of the water at the tantalizing object, probably taking it for a tidbit in the shape of a juicy moth.

Generally he succeeded in catching it, and was then yanked along the water to the boat without ceremony.

Archie's experiment was an immense success, and he had all the fun he wanted in about ten minutes.

Then he desisted.



"I'm not a fishmonger," he said, as he looked at the pile of flapping bass in his boat, "and I know when I've got enough."

He did not like "bobbing." It might do for a lazy "Cracker," whose sole object was a desire to secure fish for dinner, but he preferred less fish and more sport.

No one could ever induce him to try this method of fishing again. On the way back to camp he whipped the stream with a fly, and succeeded in taking two good-sized "green trout," as they call the black bass down South, both of which he tossed back again to their native element, they being uninjured.

All was comfortable that night. Their camp-fire being made with some slabs they found near by, some person having carried them up from the beach for burning, was very comfortable, indeed.

All of them but Dick slept ashore.

He seemed to prefer his boat, as he knew just how everything lay there. Besides, he enjoyed the swinging movement of the little canoe, rocking upon the waves, and no doubt slept more comfortably there than the others on the shore.

Every night on shore now they had to rig up a



bar made of coarse cheese-cloth, for the mosquitoes were gathering. These pests with punkies, sand flies, and fleas, made camp life in the Pelican State one of misery at times.

Even the balmy air cannot offset the discomfort wrought by them. Of course, they are found everywhere in America, except in high latitudes, where the mountains rear their heads. In no place are they worse at certain seasons than in Canada and New Brunswick. It is a fallacy to believe that mosquitoes are only natives of the tropical countries.

Morning again. Ned had arisen with the dawn and paddled down near the mouth of the river, where he could learn how the weather stood.

He came back under full sail just as the others had breakfast ready, and announced that there appeared to be no chance of their leaving that day at least. The wind had got around to southeast by east, but the sea was very high.

So they concluded to take things just as comfortably as they could.

During the morning Archie and the captain went down in their boats near the mouth of the river fishing.



They had wonderful success. The sharks gave them much trouble, snapping off a fish before they could haul it in, and finally the captain swore to have revenge.

He rigged a shark-hook to a chain about three feet in length, and then rove this latter to a hempen line almost as thick as an ordinary clothesline. Upon the shore at the point he drove in a stout stake, which he called a snubbing post.

Baiting the hook with a five-pound channel bass, he and Archie paddled out a short distance and threw it overboard.

When the *Sea Waif* was half-way to the land Archie heard a shout.

The captain already had a shark, which was quick work, indeed.

In vain did the furious monster endeavor to tear away—hook, swivel, chain, and rope held firmly enough. The captain would have been pulled into the water but for the snubbing post. Around this he had quickly taken a turn with the rope, and thus kept a check on the shark, allowing him to go but slowly.



When Archie sprang upon the sand and hurried to his side the shark was in part exhausted by its struggles.

They took hold of the rope and began to haul their prey ashore by walking away with it.

Despite the struggles of the great sea-tiger, it was drawn up to the beach, where a blow from a heavy club provided for that purpose dispatched it.

Now it was Archie's turn.

The captain baited the hook and went out with the line. Hardly had he thrown it overboard than it was seized and bodily carried off.

Archie saw the line uncoiling, and had just time to make two casts around the stake when the shark seemed to feel the steel, for the rope flew out with great rapidity.

Then there was a shock, but the post had been well planted, and it held firm.

Archie had all he wanted to do, however, to hold the monster. It rushed back and forth, making a great wake in the water.

"Surely that ain't a shark. It must be a whale," thought Archie.



"I think it's a jewfish," said the captain, now coming up.

"What's a jewfish?"

"Wait and see. We'll get him ashore."

This was easier said than done. They worked for an hour at the marine monster, but by degrees his struggles grew less, although he still continued to give his captors trouble.

At last they were able to haul him up on the sand, but it required the aid of both the others, who, attracted by the shouts of the toilers, came down the river.

The jewfish was as big around as a hogshead, and something of that build—about as ugly a monster as they had ever gazed on.

Archie had had all he desired of this heavy fishing. His hands were sore from pulling at the rope. It was too much like working for a living; and then the monsters—could they compare at all with a trim, small-mouth bass, or the beautiful speckled trout of cold Northern waters? He thought not.

Returning to camp, they lay around discussing the prospects of the future. Ned had been examining his map again, and learned that by following a cer-



tain branch of the river it would take them a number of miles on their way south.

When they reached a certain point they could make a short portage, and camp upon the beach, ready to go on as soon as the wind and sea would allow them.

They talked the matter over, and it was decided that, as the day was so far advanced, there was no use of moving then, but, should things not look more favorable in the morning, they would attempt it.

The captain took his Winchester and went off for deer. He had always been passionately fond of deerstalking, and in the past had slain dozens of the animals up in the North Woods of Michigan.

Around the camp the others were lounging, taking it easy upon the white sand.

Suddenly one of them gave a shout:

“A bear! a bear!”

Consternation ensued. Sure enough, there was a black bear in the camp. How the marauder had come there it might be hard to say, but just then it was difficult to tell which was the more surprised, the bear or the young cruisers.



Archie made for the shelter. His gun lay just within, and he experienced a savage exultation in the thought that there were now buckshot shells in the little Parker.

Ned had fallen over a log.

As he arose to his feet he grasped a hatchet in his hand, which he had found. As for Dick, he elevated his arms and cried "shoo!"

Finding the animal would not move a step, either because he was frightened, or else stubborn, Dick snatched up a tin basin and dipped it full of boiling water from a pot that swung over the fire.

By this time Archie's eager hand had clutched his gun. He stood there, but hesitated about firing.

"Shall I shoot, Dick?"

"Yes. Aim just behind the fore-shoulder, and give him both barrels."

That bear was surprised in another moment. So was Archie. When the latter recovered from the violent shock of firing both barrels so near together that the recoil was as of one, he looked toward the bear.

At the moment of firing Ned had hurled his camp ax, and Dick had sent his basin of hot water flying,



so that between them all poor bruin was in a bad way indeed.

He went down as though a log, and by the time Archie had slipped other shells in the place of the discharged ones, and the whole party had advanced, the bear was suspiciously still.

An examination showed a terrible hole back of his foreleg, which was also broken. Death must have ensued instantly. Twenty-four buckshot at short range make a fearful wound.

Archie could scarcely credit his senses—he had actually killed a bear!

True, Ned claimed some of the honor, for the heavy camp ax had struck bruin fair and square in the head, but no one could doubt the agency of his death when they looked at the gaping hole in his side, although Dick was heard to mutter something about sudden death from fright at sight of his bold attitude and the hot-water gun.

“See here, boys,” said Ned.

They bent over the bear. A close examination showed a sticky substance upon his nose and paws.

“What’s that?” asked Archie.

“Honey!” came the triumphant response.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## GIANT FIREFLIES IN THE PINE WOODS.

Archie felt his mouth water, for, if there was one thing he was fond of above another, that was honey.

"Don't I wish we knew where he got it!"

"I mean to find out," said Ned, quietly.

"You do?"

"Yes. If not that particular honey tree, one that will answer just as well."

"Count me in."

"Good. Get your high boots on. We may have to do some wading."

Archie and Ned soon set out, the former carrying his gun and a pail, the latter an ax.

Presently Ned stopped to make an observation. Then he placed a little dish containing some sugar-water on the ground near where a honeybee was working in a modest flower that peeped up through the leaves.

The bee was soon at work. When he had loaded himself down he suddenly took wings and flew away.



Ned put his hand over his eyes and strained his vision to see the little insect as long as was possible.

Of course it made a "bee-line" for home when laden with honey, as is customary.

"Come along, Archie," cried the bee hunter with alacrity.

When they had gone about a quarter of a mile in the direct line set by the honey-packer, Ned dared not trust to his judgment longer.

Again he sought a working bee, and placed the honey dish temptingly near. This time the insect led them slightly to the left of what they had thought to be a straight line.

Ned did not go much beyond the point where he lost sight of the bee. He was just about to set the honey dish down again, when suddenly he raised his head eagerly.

"What is it, Ned?"

"Listen!"

Archie did so.

"What do you hear?" asked Ned.

"Only the humming of insects."

"You mean the buzzing of bees."

"What!"



"We are near the hive. It will be found in some great hollow tree. The opening being small and the swarm large, there is always trouble in their passing in and out. Consequently, thousands flying about in a swarm make that noise."

"Yes, I have heard the hum when our Italian bees were swarming at home."

"It is something like that. Come, let's look upon our good fortune."

They advanced, and presently Archie clutched his companion by the arm.

"What's that yonder—that gray thing skulking off among the trees?"

Ned uttered an exclamation and clutched his ax nervously.

"By Jove! a panther!"

"Ah! the fellow we heard giving tongue in the swamp last night."

"Very probably."

"Shall I shoot?" said Archie, with a distinct recollection of the success attending his shot at the bear only an hour before.

"No, no. He's too far away to make sure work,



and deliver me from a hand-to-hand encounter with a wounded panther. Let him off this time, Archie."

They laughed together over the anxious manner in which this last was put.

"Panther, depart in peace!" said Archie, with a mock-tragic gesture.

They soon sighted the bee tree, which gave prospects of a big yield.

Ned took his ax and began vigorous operations. The onslaught made no commotion above, for, even if the bees had been alarmed, they could not have made away with the honey, as often occurs in a small hive.

"Will you cut it all down?"

"Yes; you can go back to camp and get the other axes with all the tin pails. We'll pick out the best of the honey and leave the balance for the bears, since one of 'em gave us the hint."

"Where is the camp?"

"Take your compass. North lies yonder, you see. The camp is southeast, or a little sou' southeast, to be particular. When you get beyond that line of trees you can see the black smoke from the pine fire."



"All right. Look for us soon."

Archie kept his eyes open for the panther as he made his way back to camp, but the sleek, gray form was not to be seen.

The captain had come in with a small deer, which he had shot a mile to the south of the camp and packed there on his shoulders. Tired as he was, when he heard that Ned had been left chopping down a honey tree he was ready for the fun.

They put on gloves and arranged a piece of mosquito netting around the hat in such a manner that by tucking it into the coat it made a veil, preventing undue familiarity on the part of any indignant bees.

All was now ready.

Taking what pans they could spare they set off through the woods. Archie clung to his gun, and Dick carried the Winchester, secretly hoping to get a glimpse of the panther, but in this both were disappointed.

As they neared the spot the blows of Ned's ax were heard, and then came a crackling sound, followed by a crash.

"Hurrah! the bee tree is down!" cried Archie.



They hurried forward. Ned had retreated and was busily engaged in fastening on his mosquito-bar helmet.

The air was alive with honeybees. They seemed stunned at the misfortune that had overtaken their home, but had already commenced to remove the honey.

In its fall the tree had split open, revealing untold treasures within. While the bees worked at one end, loading themselves up with the sweets, our friends tackled another part, where the honey was clearest and best.

Soon their pails were filled. They had no means of carrying more, and could not have used it even had they taken it. Still, there was ten times the quantity left behind.

"This will draw the bears to-night. They can smell it for miles, I believe," said the captain.

"Yes, if it was full moon I've no doubt you could sit in yonder tree with your rifle and kill from three to six before dawn."

"I won't bother with them. We've got plenty of bear meat in camp, and I never go in for the butcher act."



"Good for you, captain," said Archie.

There are many men who sail under the name of sportsmen who are little better than hogs. They kill ten times as much as they can use, and never put a fish back in the water when he has afforded them fine sport.

Such men deplete the forests and streams of the whole country. They are butchers. Our friends did not belong to this class. They experienced all the love of nature that is a part of a true sportsman's being, and never slaughtered for the sake of killing.

When they returned to camp they were pleased to find it had not been disturbed during their absence.

The honey was packed away in odd jars and screw-topped cans, emptied for this purpose. It lasted them almost through the entire cruise, and they had reason on many an occasion to feel grateful to Ned for his work in discovering the bee tree.

However, if Archie had not shot the bear the subject of honey would perhaps never have come up.

The others helped Archie skin his prize, for the animal was sleek and black, unlike many of his kind.



at this time of the year, and Archie was determined to have his hide for a memento of that exciting day.

They fared well now.

What with fresh venison and bear meat, together with black bass—which, when skinned, they found very good—their tables were fully supplied with the best the market afforded.

Paddling down the river in the afternoon, Archie managed to gather in a few shore birds, two of which were yellow legs, another a krierker, the fourth a robin snipe.

They proved nice picking, but only a taste for a quartette of hungry cruisers.

Another night was passed in their camp.

The sounds of the swamp away off to leeward and of the nearer pine woods kept Archie awake for a time. Finally he fell off into a sleep.

It must have been about midnight when the camp was aroused by a shrill yell, and every soul sprang to his feet.

“What is it?”

“The panther has been here at our venison. I



saw him as I awoke and gave a yell on the moment," said Ned.

"And he?"

"Sprang into the bush like a flash. If I thought twice I'd have put out my hand and got the Winchester here, but you know very often a fellow acts from impulse."

"Exactly," returned the captain.

An examination proved that Ned had not been dreaming.

There were marks to prove that the panther, or some animal, at least, had gotten away with part of their venison.

Through the remainder of the night they heard his shrieks in the woods. The meat was now hung from the limb of a tree, and they took turns in watching, but there was no further alarm.

Once or twice the panther seemed to come near, but the fire, now blazing well, kept him at bay—a fact Archie had cause to remember in the future.

With the coming of dawn they arose, and breakfast was soon but a memory, many hands and willing hearts making light work.

Then they prepared to start.



Their intended journey took them down toward the inlet, and they were thus enabled to get an observation.

The sea still ran too high for the launching of the canoes, though could they have passed through the surf it would have been easy enough outside.

All of them concluded that they had better stick to their plan. Perhaps ten miles could be made in that way, and this was a good point. So they paddled along.

Ned had the map given him by a friend, and he acted as courier in the advance.

Their progress was so slow that it was noon ere they reached the point where the stream came nearest the ocean.

Archie made a discovery that was apt to prove of value. At one place there was just about ten or fifteen yards between the water and an inlet of the ocean, filled at high tide.

This was their opportunity.

They began to pack their dunnage and oars over, and this task, done without any hurry, used up the balance of the afternoon.

All were glad they had stuck to this plan.



They could not have left the inlet until three in the afternoon, and, to tell the truth, would not have dared do so at that hour.

Now, should the morning prove favorable, they would already be some ten miles more or less upon their journey. They set about making a camp. By this time they had grown so accustomed to such a duty that it was soon accomplished.

Archie took the rifle, crossed the little stream, and started out for a hunt, though he did not intend going far. As is often the case, however, he saw signs of deer and began to get excited.

In the end he had gone some miles from camp, when he finally sighted a small deer and got a shot at it.

He was a fair marksman.

The deer dropped and Archie bled it. Then he proceeded to pack it in the lightest possible manner for carrying, as he meant to lug it into camp at all hazards.

Just as he finished this he was amazed to find the pine forests growing dusky.

Night was coming on.



The camp he knew to be several miles away, and even its direction was vague enough to him.

As the proper wrinkle he took out his compass. Thus he quickly got his bearings, and discovered the direction in which the camp must lie, after which he started.

There was no time to lose. He must depend upon himself entirely, for soon the gray dusk had given place to the blackness of night.

He stumbled on, but it was sore work. Obstacles seemed to multiply in his path. At times he fell over logs, or ran into patches of ugly Spanish bayonet, which stuck like so many keen-pointed needles.

Minor troubles, such as mosquitoes, he did not mind, now that he had more serious business in hand, though at another time they would have given him much worry.

He had made some headway, and thought he must be half-way to camp, when he heard the cry of that panther again. It came from a point not a hundred yards away, and directly in his path.

Archie stopped short.

The situation was anything but pleasant.

What should he do?



To go on meant a possible encounter with the savage beast. Perhaps the animal was lying in wait ahead for him.

He would not turn back, and to camp here meant continued danger.

Ah! an idea—he would get a torch.

The animal had been afraid of fire on the preceding night, and would no doubt feel timid in the presence of a torch now.

The idea was a good one; why not try it?

It was easy to find some inflammable stuff, as the leaves of the palmetto when dry burn like tinder. When he had made a little fire out of several leaves, he found some pieces of pine that would serve him in lieu of better torches.

These he made a bundle of and thrust into the flames.

In a few minutes they were burning at a lively rate.

Then Archie proceeded on his journey.

In one hand he held the rifle ready for instant use; the other grasped the torch and raised it above his head.



His progress was faster now, for he could see where to go and clear the obstacles in his path.

The cry of the panther sounded again, this time on his left, and very close.

It did not require a great amount of imagination to believe the animal was following after him.

Archie cast many an anxious glance around. Was he heading aright?

The thought startled him.

Was there no way in which he could find out the truth?

He raised his gun and sent three shots into the top of the nearest tree.

Then he listened anxiously.

To his infinite relief, answering shots came from a point apparently no more than half a mile away.

Under new encouragement he again took up his burden and began to stride forward.

Presently he saw what appeared to be two giant fireflies bobbing about in the forest ahead of him.

It flashed upon him that these were nothing less than torches held in the hands of his companions, who had come forth, thus equipped, to search for him.



He shouted; a glad reply came back, and in five minutes Dick was at his side. Then Archie felt proud of what he had done.

They soon gained the camp, and the story of his adventures was told.

A portion of the venison was cooked, and Archie thought he had never tasted any so sweet. That was the result of his labor and peril in packing it through the woods.

He was glad to be able to sleep that night in the camp. Archie had been alone in the woods of a night before now, but he did not altogether fancy the idea of that hungry panther hovering around.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## HOW THE CRUISERS WENT NIGHT-HUNTING.

Everything was favorable for their outside passage in the morning, and they had prepared things so that as little time as possible might be lost.

The fire had been kept up, so that the coffee was soon boiling, and a fragrant cup refreshed them. Breakfast was over as the sun peeped above the sea, now wonderfully quiet.

They paddled down the little estuary, and launched upon the heaving bosom of the great Atlantic. It was no trouble to pass through the surf, for it amounted to very little. Then each skipper sprang into his craft and away they sped.

All went well; the wind continued fair, and their progress, although not rapid, was steady.

At a quarter to three that afternoon they passed into the inlet at the mouth of New River.

All of them were glad at the success attending their journey thus far.

One more outside voyage would see them to Bis-



cayne Bay, and from that on their journey, though just as venturesome, would be inside work.

New River they found an admirable harbor. It was broad at the mouth and afforded a fine refuge could vessels cross the inevitable bar at the inlet.

At high tide, or when the flood tide was making, the waters fairly boiled with the multitude of fish that came in from the sea to seek for food. A stout hook and line thrown out, even with a piece of white or red flannel attached, would be eagerly seized.

Cavallia were thus taken, and afforded some sport. The only disagreeable feature of the fun was the great readiness with which sharks snapped off the captured fish. Sometimes half of it would be gone when drawn in, and then again, fish, hook, and several feet of line vanished together down the maw of a monster.

As evening drew near, the cruisers set to work capturing some of these sharks, and soon had three separate species hauled out on the beach.

A tremendous sting ray was also secured, the boys being careful to avoid his business end, as it is even more dangerous than the kicking quarters of a mule.

After supper they prowled around with the lighted



lantern and fish-spear and in half an hour secured as many channel bass, sheepshead, mullet, and pompano as they could possibly use.

Ned was especially expert with the spear, and sent it home with accuracy almost every time.

The breeze kept in the west during the night, and by morning it had become quite puffy, and when Archie awoke at dawn and found that it was still from about the same quarter he believed they would go on, their main object just now being to reach the bay.

Ned, however, shook his head.

"We're in for a norther. Ask the captain."

The latter corroborated his words, and said it would be howling down the coast before an hour had passed by.

As they could not tell what would accompany it, they believed it foolhardy to pass out from the inlet under such circumstances, and, hence, concluded to stay.

The prophecy was fulfilled, for down came the norther, and it proved to be a severe one, although not at all cold.

Outside it looked wild and stormy, but under the



trees one felt comfortable enough, for they served as a wind-break.

"What's that?" asked Dick, as they sat about the fire after supper, talking.

"I'd say it was the bark of a dog, if I didn't know better," replied Archie.

"That's just what it is, though."

Listening, they could hear the dogs approaching the camp. Presently a man advanced with several curs at his heels. He was a gaunt-looking specimen of humanity, evidently a "Cracker."

Upon greeting him cordially they learned that he was a resident, having a palmetto shanty but half a mile away.

"I seen you'uns come into the river, an' thort as how I'd run over an' see if ye wouldn't like to take a run with me to-night."

"What're you hunting, Tom?" asked Ned, who had heard of the man above.

"I'm out after 'coons and 'possums, though we might run ag'in' higher game."

Archie forgot his fatigue. Even his thrilling experience of the preceding night passed out of his



mind. He looked at Dick. Would you care to go, Archie?"

"Yes, if you went along."

"All right, unless Ned here will go. I don't care to leave the captain alone."

Ned, however, declared his intention to hug the camp-fire, and nurse a sore knee. So Archie and Dick donned their "waders," as they termed their long boots, took a few things along, and then announced themselves ready to accompany Tom.

Dick shouldered the faithful Winchester now, while Archie had his little double-barrel, as they struck off into the woods. At first it was difficult to make progress, for the woods were close, and, but for Tom's knowledge of the neighborhood, the others could have done nothing. Soon, however, the country became more open.

"Now for fun," said the "Cracker."

He spoke to his dogs.

They seemed to know just what was wanted, and began the hunt with animation, so that before long their barks announced that some animal had been treed.

Upon hastening to the spot they found that it was



a 'coon. The animal sat upon a limb looking down with complacency at his foes upon the ground.

Now Tom's ax came into play, and the tree, being a small one, soon came crashing to the ground.

Then the dogs sprang in among the branches; there was a short but fierce struggle, and poor "'coony" was tossed to the feet of the dogs' master, void of life, while the intelligent animals looked up at him expectantly, as though waiting for further orders.

The hunt was resumed.

Before long there came once more the signal barks from the dogs. A little light upon the subject showed that a queer combination existed. The dogs had scared a 'coon up one tree, while an opossum occupied another.

Here was fun.

"Keep your eyes on Mr. 'Coon, Archie," cried Dick, as he seized the ax.

"What are you going to do?"

"Cut down the 'possum first."

The sturdy blows of the ax resounded through the dark forest. Soon the tree upon which the opossum had taken refuge came crashing down.



Again the dogs pounced into the branches, when an unexpected event occurred.

Out came an animal which Archie recognized as an opossum, though the dogs seemed to be fully engaged in the tree-top.

He took in the situation in a flash, and, throwing up his Parker, tumbled the escaping animal over in a trice. When the *mêlée* was over and the spoils collected, it was found that they had three 'possums. The tree had been a regular nest.

Where was Mr. 'Coon all this while?

He had vanished, but was soon discovered up in another tree.

As chopping had become a trifle monotonous by this time, Dick proposed bringing him down by the aid of a little lead, and his first shot did the business.

The 'coon fell with a thump, and, though the dogs leaped upon him, there was no life left to be shaken out.

"Hurrah!" cried Archie.

They had now experienced all the fun they yearned for on this night, and, with their load of 'possums and 'coons, took up the road to the camp.

It was reached in due time without any mishap,



and those who had remained behind had to hear the story of the hunt.

Tom consented to lay down with them before the fire and spend the night.

In the morning two of them went in their canoes—Tom paddling the dinghy, with his dogs squatted around him—over to his cabin, where he had a very good well, at which they filled their water cans.

Some time was spent on New River in fishing and hunting, while waiting for a favorable spell of weather in which to continue their outside journey.

At length the long-looked-for opportunity came, and they said good-by to New River.

Their good fortune on the last trip gave them hope for this one, but it was doomed to disappointment, for they had made but half the distance when the breeze whipped around in a most unprecedented fashion, and came out of the southeast.

Nothing could have been worse.

Although sailing close-hauled and still making fair progress, in a short time they were battling against a heavy sea.

Archie feared trouble was about to come, and that they would have to beach their little craft again, for



it was worse than before—the billows were heavier, and they arose and fell upon mountains or in valleys.

Still, the wind being strong, they managed to keep well together, which, under the circumstances, was fortunate, for they had different tactics to pursue now than on the former occasion.

Archie realized this in the persistent manner in which they pushed on, instead of trying to beach the boats.

He was thrilled with the excitement, and every nerve seemed on the *qui vive* as he clung to the windward gunwale of the *Sea Waif* and kept his eyes on the alert.

They could see the shore when out of the trough of the sea. Ned was watching it carefully and looking for the opening marked upon his chart, and which must be near at hand.

Biscayne Bay is really inclosed on the east by a line of islands or exposed bars, beginning at a point near its northern end. Here it is the Florida Keys really begin.

It was through the passage between the first key and the mainland that the cruisers hoped to escape from the increasing fury of the Atlantic.



They could not stand it much farther, as both wind and sea were becoming so extremely violent that the mosquito fleet threatened to succumb.

Archie was clinging to his boat literally with tooth and nail. Every moment he had new difficulties to meet and overcome.

He believed that as long as the others held out he would be able to do so, but, deep down in his soul, he was really disturbed by the violent aspect of their surroundings.

Were they doomed to go under?

He shut his teeth hard and kept his eyes upon his companions as well as the flying scud would allow. They pitched and tossed at times as though completely at the mercy of the wind and wave.

Archie had only his mainsail up, and with a double reef in that; and yet even then there were times when he thought it would be his destruction.

So they plowed along, making headway, and yet in momentary danger of capsizing.

Such a thing, under the existing circumstances, would not have been a frolic—the chances were in favor of its meaning something more serious—even death.



Archie's ears were suddenly saluted with the glad sound of a blast from Ned's horn.

This was a signal for which they had long been waiting.

It signified that the passage through which Ned meant to lead them was in sight.

A little more of wild tossing upon that heaving sea, during which all of them took observations as far as lay in their power to do so. Then came two sharp blasts, which signified that it was time to change their course, and, taking the breeze fairly over their port quarter, make the run in.

Away they went.

Oh! but it was a wild chase upon the great billows, and one that made Archie hold his very breath with suspense.



## CHAPTER XIX.

## ALLIGATOR CAMP.

They passed the jaws of land, seen dimly through the blinding spray.

Should the boats head upon any rock or sand spit now, they were lost.

No wonder the cruisers were wrapped in suspense during that speedy passage.

They rushed past the tongue of land and no mishap followed.

“Hurrah!”

Every one of them joined in the glad shout as they found themselves upon the broad surface of the bay, for their escape from all mishaps had been little short of a miracle.

The bay was smooth when compared with the tumultuous heavings of the ocean without.

Even the little dinghy of the captain had weathered the trial, hardly shipping a pint of sea water.

When they had in a measure recovered from the effect of their unpleasant experience they picked out



their course and were soon bowling along merrily toward the point where it was decided to camp.

From this place they hoped to reach the Everglades, and, as this water-covered section of the country was unusually high for this season of the year, Lake Okeechobee might be finally sighted. Sailing across this dreary stretch of solitary water, they hoped to strike the western shore about the vicinity of the place where the great Disston Canal begins.

This would in turn take them through Lake Flirt and another lake, eventually bringing them to the Caloosahatchee River, down which they could paddle, or sail, past Fort Meyers, to where it joins the gulf at a point called Punta Rassa.

The wind became fresher as the bay opened before them, and at length the little fleet came to near the shore.

Sails were stowed and spruce blades brought into requisition as they made their way slowly along, looking for a good camping spot.

Archie led, and sighted a small stream that led into the bay at this point. They ran up this, finding



a nice dry spot under some palmetto trees, and here, then, the camp was pitched.

Never did cruisers enjoy rest more than the four who gathered around the fire on that evening.

They had no ambition to do anything but lie around after supper was over and smoke as they compared experiences.

During the evening they were visited by a couple of settlers who had seen the fleet, and knew where their camp was pitched. These gentlemen kindly brought some yams, cocoanuts, and fruit.

Ned showed Archie how to cook a green coconut so that when sweetened in its shell it was a delicious blanc mange.

That night all slept so soundly that they knew not of the presence of an unwelcome visitor until morning, when a haunch of venison was found missing, and they discovered the tracks of a wildcat.

Oysters were struck nearby—great fellows in shells five inches and more in length, and clinging to bushes at low tide.

Upon these they feasted.

Crabs were plenty, and in half an hour, with a landing-net and a piece of meat tied to the end of



a string, Archie landed a couple of dozen large fellows.

Upon the shores tens of thousands of little fiddler crabs could be seen. They retreated to their holes with surprising celerity upon being approached, and could only be captured by cunning, or else vigorous digging.

With these as bait, sheepshead could always be secured in certain places, readily found by any one at all versed in the ways of this fish that feeds almost entirely upon mollusks, which fact is what gives the flesh of the sheepshead and pompano such sweetness and delicacy.

During the day succeeding their arrival at the bay they were visited by a well-known canoeist who was spending the winter in that section. From this gentleman they obtained much valuable information.

He did not fancy the trip they had before them, and possibly had our friends seen as much experience in the swamps of the Pelican State as he, they might have ended their cruise by a passage behind the Keys to Key West instead; but their course was set, and no amount of friendly advice could turn them from it.



The second day came.

It saw them on their way to the mouth of the Miami. Here they took advantage of an opportunity that might not occur again for a long time—to lay in full stocks of water and provisions.

Sunday was spent in the society of these kind friends who had come to wish them Godspeed upon their journey.

The air was beautiful. Down here they need fear the cold breath of the norther no longer.

They no longer wore a coat over their red flannel shirts except at night, when the air became cool, and extra covering comfortable.

On Monday they took a last fond look out upon the bay and the ocean beyond, as seen through Bear's Cut, and then, with the light wind favoring them from the east, set sail.

They were not enabled to make use of their sails for any great length of time, for the circumstances did not remain favorable.

Double blades then came into play, and lunch was eaten while resting under some shady live-oak trees that overhung the water.



How beautiful and bright everything seemed around them.

Their spirits were high, and Ned sang his favorite songs from time to time. As he paddled along some distance in the advance, he being the pilot and navigator of the expedition, they could hear his clear voice chanting:

“But the ship will tack, and the tar come back  
To the first love of his heart.”

At four o'clock they discovered a fine spot for a camp. Here was an invitation impossible to resist.

Canoes were drawn up on the shore, or secured in other ways, and then the usual preparations went on.

They had eaten supper and were lying about the roaring fire taking their ease as well as the myriads of mosquitoes would allow, when a tremulous sound arose on the air, gradually deepening into a bellow, at which Dick gave a dismal groan.

“We're in for a serenade,” he said.

“A bull!” cried Archie, looking up.

“Exactly,” said Dick, dryly.

“Where do you suppose he is?”



"Out there in the water—perhaps astride of an old log."

"What!"

"An alligator bull, Archie."

"Oh!"

Archie, you see, had had little experience among the alligators.

With the coming of dawn they had finished their breakfast and were on the way.

Archie's experience had been considerably augmented during the night. He was very apt to know the plaintive whine or bull bellow of an alligator after this.

Their progress was satisfactory during the morning, and they found it better to move thus while the day was cool and rest at noon.

"What in the world is that?" asked Archie, pointing toward the shore.

"Hallo! an alligator trap, as I live," replied Dick.

"An alligator trap?"

"Yes. That object hoisted in the air as you see is an alligator. What raises his head and the fore part of his body from the ground? Paddle over with me and see."





" Archie found that the alligator was enclosed just back of the fore-  
legs by a loop of rope, the end of which was fastened to a stout sapling."  
See page 245.







Archie found that the alligator was inclosed just back of the forelegs by a loop of rope, the end of which was fastened to a stout sapling.

It was a snare such as rabbits are caught in. Archie had known of wolves being trapped in the same way, and here he found it made use of by some ingenious alligator-skin hunter.

The reptile was alive, but helpless, and awaited the coming of the hunter, who might set the snare afresh by bending the straight sapling again.

They were now making their way along what appeared to be a creek, the water of which was no longer salty; but they only used it for boiling potatoes or washing up tin platters and kettles.



## CHAPTER XX.

## THE RED JACKETS IN THE EVERGLADES.

Ned pointed out a number of trees with names that were new to his companions.

Generally speaking, their course lay through swampy lands. Here the funeral moss hung from the limbs of the trees, giving a weird look to the whole scene.

Ned made sure work of it, and was on his guard continually, for he had found certain little errors in his map, though on the whole it was correct.

That night they had to camp in their boats, but this was nothing out of the way. The canoes were drawn close together, and they talked together after supper while enjoying the usual solace, a pipe.

Somehow the conversation came around to a point where wild hogs were mentioned.

This caused a laugh.

The joke was on Archie, for while in camp up on the Halifax they had been troubled by the depredations of an old sow, followed by a half-grown colony of young swine.



These rascals had been very daring, and rooted around the camp at all hours of the night. Their depredations had especially annoyed Archie, and during the early part of the evening he had waged warfare on them.

In the middle of the night the camp had been aroused by a tremendous clatter of pans.

“The Greek! the Greek!” yelled Dick.

Archie took in the situation at a glance as he bounded from the tent lightly clad. The old sow with the numerous progeny had started in to get a pot of hominy left over from the previous supper, and to reach it she had to tumble among the assembled platters and kettles.

When Archie appeared upon the scene the whole troop was rattling the tins about in the greatest disorder, until it really sounded as might the alarm on that night long ago when the Turk awoke to find noble Bozzaris and his band of Greek heroes in the camp.

Archie was a man for an emergency. He snatched up the first thing that came to hand, which happened to be a great pine knot, and made a dash upon the enemy.



They wisely retreated, deeming discretion the better part of valor, when the enemy made such an advance upon them.

Then began a wild chase.

Archie was fully aroused, and he followed the troop hither and thither, dealing them blows that sounded through the grove, and at each resounding thwack his companions went into fresh convulsions of laughter.

Finally Archie came in, the perspiration streaming from his forehead, but he smiled grimly with the air of a conqueror, since he had dispersed the enemy—for one hour.

The hogs run wild in the woods, but all are claimed by owners, and it is a dangerous thing to kill one at any time.

This was only one of the humorous memories of the long cruise that would haunt them in the years to come.

They were now far away from the coast, and really in the heart of Southern Florida.

Birds of beautiful plumage were seen on every hand, for the fiend had, apparently, not yet penetrated this spot.



Archie obtained a scarlet ibis, which he meant to have stuffed later on.

"Boys," said Ned, suddenly, "I see by the map that we are within a short distance of a bird's nesting place. What say, shall we visit it?"

"As for me," returned Dick, firmly, "I'm comfortable, thank you. Sooner shall this rock fly from its base than I"

"What rock?"

"Oh, that's figurative, to carry out the expression of Roderic Dhu."

"I take it that the sentiment of the crowd, then, is averse to my proposition. All in favor of it say aye."

No one answered.

Ned laughed.

"Just as well, boys. We can see all we want of the place in the morning."

"Yes, our tents are up, and I for one don't propose taking them down until morning. We're sporting for sport, you know."

Then there was another laugh.

While they were launching the canoes at New Smyrna, and working like pack horses to get their



goods down out of the camp, they had been observed by a boy who had just come from the North to be a resident—a Jimmy Branagan by name.

He seemed puzzled to understand how any one bent on pleasure could work so hard, and at last propounded the amazing conundrum:

“Say, be you fellows a sporting for sport?”

The canoeists looked into each other's faces, and as the ridiculous nature of their labor, under the guise of fun, broke upon them they laughed wildly.

It was a standard joke after that, and when any one of them seemed to be enduring more than the ordinary share of hard luck he was sure to hear a companion cruiser add to his misery by shouting out:

“Say, be you sporting for sport?”

The interrogation was sure to bring a smile to the face of the weary paddler.

As the mosquitoes were very troublesome, the cruisers found good use for their bars, and it was sweet to lie there safe from assault while the droning song went on outside.

There was hardly a night but what they were lulled to slumber by the chorus of the swamp. Alli-



gators, snakes, fresh-water turtles, crawlers of all kinds, and birds innumerable—these were their constant companions.

They were off soon after sunrise, and Ned led the way up a narrow creek to the “egg farm,” as he called it. Of course, it was in the swamp. A more fearful-looking place Archie never gazed upon.

Here all manner of plume birds nested, and the presence of thousands of eggs brought to the spot animals and reptiles that were fond of delicate morsels.

Feathers covered the ground, while the odor was simply fearful. Snakes gathered by scores, some of them hideous monsters. Archie was fearful lest one should fall from a tree upon his canoe and chase him overboard.

The noise, too, was awful; the chattering and shrieking of birds, old and young, making the welkin ring, so that a few minutes gave the canoeists quite enough.

“Whew! Let’s get out of this,” said Ned.

“Ditto!”

“Isn’t it awful?” from Archie.



They turned and fled from the spot, their curiosity fully satisfied—no more “egg farm” for them.

“To-day we ought to strike the Everglades,” Ned announced.

At three o'clock they rounded a bend and came to a halt.

Before them they saw the historic region of Southern Florida—the Everglades.

A popular impression of this region seems to be that of a swamp, but this is entirely erroneous. It is reached through swamps, but the Everglades themselves consist of vast tracts of water from one to ten feet in depth, and dotted thickly with islands.

It is a beautiful sight in February, when myriads of flowers dot the grasses growing upon the shores.

A gentle easterly breeze dimpled the surface of the water. This stirred the hearts of our friends as even the beauty of the scene failed to do. They gave a shout as they tackled the long-disused sails and prepared to throw them to the breeze.

In five minutes the canoes were in line, moving along like snowy birds.

“This is living,” grunted Ned, stretching himself out on deck, and looking contented.



All were agreed to that.

It had been quite a time since they had made progress unaided by muscular effort, and a sense of quiet content pervaded them as they lay back and watched the ripples break away from the sharp bows of their craft.

At about four o'clock they reached their intended destination, having had a delightful sail of several miles.

"Hurrah for a bully camp!" said Ned.

\* There was every indication of it.

Soon the tent was up and supper preparing. The atmosphere was redolent with the odors of a million flowers. They were not troubled by the alligators now, for the saurians seemed to stick to the swamps, generally.

One pest alone remained—the mosquitoes. They descended upon the camp in countless myriads, doubtless attracted by the fire, and made life a burden until the cruisers, owning themselves defeated, wisely withdrew within the shelter of the tent.

Dick wickedly suggested that Archie rout them with a pine knot, as he had the wild hogs up at New Smyrna.



"I'd probably afford a vast amount of sport to you fellows, prancing around here chasing a villainous mosquito with a pine knot as big as a house, and achieve glory, too, but I'm inclined to be humble, so I respectfully beg to be excused," replied Archie, tersely.

"Come Dick, give us that old shanty of yours," said the captain.

"Which?" evasively.

"You call it 'Roll a Man Down.' "

"It can't be sung alone. Every second line is a chorus."

"All right. We'll join in."

"You won't like it."

"Humbug! I heard it before you were born, I reckon. Avast heaving. Tune up."

"Well, if you must, you must. Here goes."

There is little in the words, but a great deal in the singing. Dick drawled it out in a way highly entertaining, and the others boomed the second and last lines as a chorus with great effect. For the benefit of those who may have heard Dr. Neide sing it around the camp-fire at some old-time canoe meet



at Grindstone Island or Lake George, and who may wish to have the words, we give them room:

ROLL A MAN DOWN.

As I was going down Tennyson Street,  
Now, away, oh! roll a man down!  
As I was going down Tennyson Street,  
Oh! give us some time to roll a man down.

A pretty young girl I chanced to meet,  
Now, away, oh! roll a man down!  
A pretty young girl I chanced to meet,  
Now, give us some time to roll a man down.

Said she to me, "Oh, where d'ye come from?"  
Now, away, oh! roll a man down!  
Said she to me, "Oh, where d'ye come from?"  
Now, give us some time to roll a man down.

A flying fish-catcher from old Hong Kong,  
Now, away, oh! roll a man down!  
A flying fish-catcher from old Hong Kong,  
Now, give us some time to roll a man down.

Said she to me, "Oh, won't you stand treat?"  
Now, away, oh! roll a man down!  
Said she to me, "Oh, won't you stand treat?"  
Now, give us some time to roll a man down.

Said I, "Old girl, you're on the dead-beat,"  
Now, away, oh! roll a man down!  
Said I, "Old girl, you're on the dead-beat,"  
Now, give us some time to roll a man down.

From larboard to starboard away we go,  
Now, away, oh! roll a man down!  
From larboard to starboard away we go,  
Now, give us some time to roll a man down.

Belay!

Ned followed with a favorite of all, a song as old



as the hills, and yet ever fresh—"The Arrow and the Song."

Thus they passed their first evening in the famous, mysterious Everglades, which years before had rung with the war cries of the fierce Seminoles, but perhaps never before echoed with the spirit of sentimental song.

Just after they left the island and started upon their way, Dick drew their attention to an object that had rounded the end of the land, and was following them.

"An Indian!"

Sure enough, it was a Seminole in his dugout canoe. His sail was large and square. He seemed to use it entirely to manipulate the boat instead of having a rudder.

As the wind came from the south, and over the port quarter, they could see him hanging out to windward, so they allowed him to come up.

He was a stoical fellow, wearing the usual turban headdress of his tribe, a colored handkerchief wrapped round and round the head as a protection against the sun. Besides, it has become the emblem of their race, just as a Chinaman's queue is.



He could speak but little English, though he seemed to understand all they said, and manifested intense interest in their boats. Archie hoisted all his sail to show him how easily the *Sea Waif* could leave him in the lurch, and the fellow actually laughed.

He invited them to visit the camp. Ned engaged him in conversation, as he knew a few words of the Seminole tongue.

"What say, fellows, shall we go?"

"How far is it?"

"Two hours' journey beyond that island yonder."

"I say so," declared Dick.

"We will never have another chance, boys."

"Count me in. We can afford to give a day to seeing these strange people in their homes," put in Archie.

That settled it.

The Seminole seemed pleased to know that they had decided to go with him, for he was evidently anxious to show his people the beautiful little canoes.

They saw nothing warlike about him.



True, he had a gun in his boat, and some game, but his looks were docile enough.

They remembered what the "pineapple man of Eden" had said about them, and could believe he knew whereof he spoke.

So the voyage was continued, and having rounded the island, beating up into the wind for a time, they drew near the home of the Seminoles.

Here they were greeted by the rest of the camp.

Half a dozen men, twice as many squaws, and a host of papooses constituted the whole settlement.

They were a harmless lot, subsisting by hunting and fishing. Back on the island they had quite a garden, and the boys soon found that, as of yore, among the noble North American Indians, the lordly warriors made the squaws do all the manual labor therein.

They spent this night at the camp, but slept each in his boat, not that they feared thievery, but because it promised a more comfortable bed than the shore, and they smiled when they saw that the Indians used mosquito nets.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## A LOST CANOE CLUB.

During the evening some flights of oratory were indulged in. Ned covered himself with glory, and even the famous old Indian orator of the Six Nations, Red Jacket, after whom they had named their canoe club, might have been envious had he listened.

They slept well.

In the morning they parted from their friends, the Seminoles, taking souvenirs with them and leaving others behind. Ned had spent nearly an hour in trying to get some information out of the head man of the tribe, and did not believe he had succeeded, because it failed to agree with his map.

The Indians had lived in the Everglades all their lives, and undoubtedly knew about the intricate passages, but they possibly lacked the power of giving this information to others, so Ned thought.

A fair breeze was given them from the start, but it died out after a while, to come up, just as they



expected, a stiff head wind. Against this they bucked for five mortal hours, making wet progress. It was hard work, but anything was better than paddling, so they kept it up until three in the afternoon.

As the wind was still rising and clouds gathering beyond threatened a wild night, they looked around for some place of shelter.

For once it was lacking. Night was coming on, a night that threatened storm, and the only islands within the range of their vision were small patches covered with bushes.

"We're in for it," said Ned, grimly.

It seemed so, and again did they realize a truth they had learned upon the Indian River—that in the end it does not pay to beat against a head wind.

They were not to be daunted by trifles, however, and made the most of a bad bargain. Since they could not have what they wanted, they took what they could get, and did the best with it.

Working to the lee side of the largest island, they tied up to the stoutest bushes with cables, and then threw out a stern anchor—the same tactics so often carried out on the Halifax and Indian Rivers, only



there was no pier to the windward now to break the force of the gale.

Tents were put up.

Extra care was taken with each fastening, for the coming storm looked ugly.

When everything had been carefully examined a second time and pronounced perfect, they set about making themselves as comfortable as possible inside.

Jocular remarks were bandied from one to another as they prepared supper.

Hardly had this duty been completed when a dull roaring was heard. It sounded like a railroad train a mile away.

"Here she comes, boys!" cried the captain.

Nearer and nearer it sounded. Each one awaited the first strain, knowing that in all probability it would be the most savage of all.

Archie looked out.

Beyond the low island, half a mile away, was the storm, sweeping down on them with great rapidity.

There was a deafening roar, and then the gale struck the canoes. Partly shielded by the low island, they only tugged and strained at their anchorage, bobbing up and down like corks.



For hours the wind shrieked about their ears, actually lifting up the spray at the weather side of the island and dashing it up against the tents like rain.

The lightning and thunder had made lively work in the beginning of the night, but, believing they had seen the worst of it, the cruisers lay down to sleep.

In the morning the storm had disappeared, and they had a fair breeze to push on. Sail was at once made, and the scene of their dismal night's anchorage left behind.

Soon they were traversing the passages in between the numerous islands, and here Ned could be observed studying his map closely, for he knew what tremendous trouble a blunder would make.

It was monotonous work.

They had reason to believe that it would end in their taking to a creek again, where the paddle would be their only propelling power.

Indeed, more than once already they had to get out their blades and dip them deeply, for the breeze was very light and captious, at times favorable, and then again contrary.



Their progress was slow, but toward evening it came out strong, and they sprang up from their indolent attitude to take advantage of it.

For a time they bowled away merrily, and all seemed well, but Archie was watching Ned, and he thought the latter looked troubled.

“What’s the matter, Ned?”

“The map’s kind of mixed here.”

Archie laughed, remembering how the poor Indian who was found almost starved indignantly denied being lost, and striking himself on the chest cried magnificently:

“Indian no lost—wigwam lost; Indian here.”

Somehow none of them slept very well that night. A feeling as of some impending evil was hanging over them.

In the morning, however, they were bright and full of spirits, for with the rising of the sun their doubts and fears took wings and flew away.

They began to move on.

When certain bends were made Ned marked them upon his map, and they endeavored to fix them on their minds, so that they might recognize them again.



By noon so many twists and turns had been made that this endeavor was utterly out of the question.

Then Ned's words came up, and they realized that it would be just as hard to retreat as to go forward. In a word, they were already lost.

One satisfaction lay in the fact that they kept making progress.

This lasted until three o'clock, and then came their first rebuff, when the estuary they were following up appeared no longer navigable.

Its width was still the same, but the branches of trees came so low that even without their masts stepped, it was utterly impossible to make forward progress.

There was nothing to do but to turn back, for the map had been proven faulty.

They held a consultation.

"The route the Indians told me must lie far to the left. Let us work that way as we grope along. Then we will have the satisfaction of knowing that we are going farther away all the while, but drawing gradually nearer."

Ned's words were deemed wise, and their very



first move was to work off in a southwestern direction.

The first line of open water running to the left, they entered. This soon brought them to another estuary that ran in a general direction the same way as that they had been following when they were brought to a halt.

When it came time to camp they had not found any impediment here, but their hopes were not allowed to run away with reason.

Around the fire they told stories and cracked jokes as usual.

The ground not being suitable for sleeping, they determined to spend the night aboard their craft, where they could be sure of comfortable beds, at least.

What would the morrow bring forth? This was the question each asked himself as he climbed into his canoe and settled down under the blankets.

It was all very well to be cheerful, but they ought to look the difficulty squarely in the face.

To be lost in a labyrinthine Florida swamp was no child's play. One could wander about here in a



boat for weeks and find no means of reaching civilization.

Breakfast again.

The canoes were made in readiness for a start, and at eight o'clock exactly the paddles again dipped in the brown swamp water. At nine the cruisers were clustered together looking gloomily at each other. Further progress was stopped, for the trees again prevented a passage.

They might have attempted to cut through, but Ned pointed to the fact that there seemed to be no passage, as he could not detect any current, try as might.

All that could be done was to turn back and try afresh. They had to return almost to their camp before finding a passage to the south.

After much groping about, with time lost and very little progress made, they came to another one of the main "canals," as they called those running northwest.

It was now three o'clock.

The passage was wide, so that they could even



step their masts and sail along it, the breeze being favorable.

Every hour they expected to see the wide passage open into the lake, but evening came without such a thing occurring, and they had to camp with uncertainty still ahead.



## CHAPTER XXII.

## OKEECHOBEE, THE LONELY LAKE.

"I have learned that there is positively no current to this arm or passage," said Ned that evening.

"What does that imply?"

"That it is merely a lagoon, and not a passage running from the Everglades over to Lake Okeechobee."

"How do you know this?"

"Very easily. I understand that through this artery the water is always flowing one way or another. If Okeechobee is higher than the Everglades, in the dry season it flows into the latter, while during the wet months the current is reversed."

"I understand. And at no time, then, is this passage stationary?"

"No. I find there is not the slightest current here, or if so it is imperceptible."

"Then it seems positive that we are on the wrong tack. What is the use of going further?"

"I see none."

"We passed an opening a mile back that led



south. It might be well for us to go back and take it."

"I believe so. We will talk it over around the camp-fire to-night."

"How about the chief of the Seminoles now?"

"He was right and the map wrong. If we had followed his directions, I believe we would ere this have been on Okeechobee."

Archie said no more. The brightness of the day had fled, and their future still seemed like the coming night.

He noticed fish gliding about the water-grasses as he paddled in the dinghy, and resolved to make use of the spear after supper while the others were discussing the situation, that is if he could avoid being murdered by the mosquitoes.

The lantern was rigged and the dinghy made use of to convey the fish-spearer to his point. At first he miscalculated his aim badly, but upon experimenting found out what was wrong. From that time on he improved until he was able to send the barb with as much skill as any of his more experienced companions.

Of course the variety of fish was nothing as com-



pared to the Indian River, Lake Worth, and Biscayne Bay, where in the salt water a dozen different kinds could be secured in an evening, and of the most edible species; but they felt fish-hungry, and black bass, perch, and fish of that calibre made good eating.

There is certainly no danger of a man starving in Florida. Plenty surrounds him, and only needs an outstretched hand to seize it.

The dangers that lurk there are wholly in the line of a possible snake bite and disease; the water is generally to be avoided, as it will bring on some terrible fever quicker than anything else.

Dick was something of a doctor, and had prepared their systems against any inception of malaria, and they were also careful about their drinking-water.

Whenever it was at all possible they had a camp-fire, which is a good safeguard against this insidious disease.

Altogether they had no fear. Dick's trouble had probably arisen in part from certain food he had eaten, and which had not agreed with him.

He was in fine health now, and in better spirits



than any of the others, seeing only the ridiculous side of their trouble.

All agreed that there was no use in following this passage further, but it would be policy to strike at once for the next one on the left.

Then they might take time by the forelock and try to discover whether there was any current to the next canal before embarking their fortunes on it.

It was Archie who proposed this, and the others fell in with the idea, pronouncing it good.

So they passed the night, keeping up a roaring fire to "warm the whole out-doors," as the captain declared.

The usual chorus was to be heard around them during the livelong hours of the night, but by this time they had become so accustomed to hearing it that they would really have been uneasy had a solemn silence rested upon the scene, believing that it presaged some coming storm.

A cool breeze was blowing when Archie opened his eyes in the morning. Looking out he saw that it was broad daylight, and the sun was about rising.

The scene was charming indeed. Birds caroled in the trees, while others hovered over the water,



looking for a breakfast. Cranes and herons stalked along the edges of the lagoon, solemn and dignified. Some ducks floated about near the other shore, and a couple of queer old pelicans that had found their way inland were sailing along with outstretched wings close to the water line, ready to settle where the prospect seemed inviting.

The surface of the lagoon was dancing with the cool north breeze, and the little wavelets lapped the sides of the canoes as they rocked upon the bosom of the water.

Archie loved to sit in the boat and look out upon the dimpled surface of the water, either with the sun or moon shining upon it. He was passionately fond of the water in its more peaceful shades.

"Fleet ahoy, here!" he called out.

"Overslept ourselves for once," said Dick as his head came into view.

The captain had been up once with the fire, and all it needed was a little wood thrown among the embers, when the flames sprung up again.

Soon the coffee was boiling, the fish frying, and the bacon done to a turn.



"All hands on deck to jettison cargo," called the captain, who was master of ceremonies.

They found their appetites still held good, and after each day their united cargo really did show an appreciable loss in bulk.

The course was now back for a mile, with the wind about over the larboard rail. Then the cross-passage was entered with a fair wind at first.

After a time it grew so tortuous that they were unable to sail at all, and presently even the masts had to be unstepped and stowed away, so low hung the gnarled branches of the trees forming the islands.

By noon they were having a tough time, for the creek had become so shallow, though wide, that they even stuck upon the mud at times and had hard work getting on.

At a quarter-past three Archie, who chanced at the time to be in the lead—they had all held that position half a dozen times during the day as one or the other got stuck in the mud and fell behind—gave utterance to a whoop and waved his paddle.

This excited the others, and a scramble was the result to join him.



They found that his discovery was of the utmost importance, for he had come to where the shallow passage which they had been following debouched into another running in the true direction.

This latter was deep, and Ned thrilled with the declaration that it had a positive current coming from the northwest.

When they lay to for the night they felt that the right stream had been struck at last, and that they were on the way to the lake now without a doubt.

This cheered them.

That night the green islands about them echoed with their songs. They had left the Everglades, and the water was no longer green with the grass that grew beneath.

Never would they forget that sight—it was like looking out upon some great savannah or prairie, and yet all of the grass, dotted with flowers, grew in several feet of water with narrow passages between. Then there was the islands, some of them timbered, with birds singing in the trees, and beyond perhaps a stretch of open water like a lake, dimpled in the gentle breeze.

This was the home of the Seminoles.



On the following morning the cruisers were once more *en route*.

They had done much "tracking," but had made no portage since they were a few miles up the Miami River at a rapids known as the Falls, where it had been deemed expedient to carry around, though, had they been coming down, they would have possibly shot the rapids.

All eyes were now on the watch for signs of the great lake ahead.

At four o'clock they were breasting quite a current, and from the indications around them believed their destination could not be far away.

"The lake lies beyond that point, boys," announced the captain, shortly.

The others said nothing, but a short time later a cheer broke from them as they realized that this was so.

Rounding the point they discovered a vast, solitary sheet of water that stretched away as far as the eye could rest.

Okeechobee was before them!

It appeared a strange body of water. Seen as the sun was about sinking out of sight, there was some-



thing so solemn and desolate about it that the cruisers were appalled.

Few signs of life appeared here.

They missed the rush of the mullet, the roar of the surf, and all the accompaniments of their trip down the Indian River.

A fishhawk circled in the blue ether above—or perhaps an eagle—a crane standing like a sentry in the shallow water near by—perhaps an alligator sunning himself on a log near the brink—these were all the signs of life around.

The trees overhanging the water were draped with great festoons of Spanish moss, giving a weird aspect to the scene.

“Alabama—here we rest,” said Ned.

“Yes, it would never do to venture out on that sheet of water at this time. We may have to pass around it yet. That is a question to be decided to-night,” put in Dick.

They paddled along until they came to a place where a fire could be started, and there halted for the night.

At the consultation after supper it was decided to



wait until morning before settling their course. Much would depend upon how the day turned out.

If it was squally or the wind against them, they could not dream of heading for the west, but would begin their trip up the shore of the lake, hoping to reach the mouth of the Kissimee River by the end of the second day.

Then changing their course to southwest, they would coast along until they found the beginning of the great Disston Canal, that had lowered the waters of Okeechobee perceptibly and drained millions of acres of land that at one time had always been overflowed during the wet season of the year.

If the lake looked solitary and grewsome with the shades of night settling upon it, the woods toward the east were lively enough.

They heard more than the usual chorus of sounds proceeding thence. Panther cries were wafted to their ears at intervals, and what, with the hooting of owls, screams of foraging wildcats, and all the other sounds incident to a night in the wilds, there was no sense of loneliness there.

Archie did not sleep well.

He was glad that they were no longer lost in the



Everglades, but there was also an uncertainty about their future course that broke him up.

As usual, he was the first to awaken, and soon had the others up.

“Wind from the west and squally!”

That settled it.

They must head for the mouth of the Kissimee River, and keep within a reasonable distance of the shore.

There was quite a little sea, and the boats had a wet time of it, but they made progress, and throughout the livelong day kept on for the north.

When evening drew near they looked for a camping spot.

One and all of the cruisers were weary of the day's work, and glad of a chance to stretch their limbs. Good progress had been made, and Ned declared that another day like this would take them to the Kissimee.

They cooked supper around the camp-fire, and enjoyed it just as much as on the first night out.

On the following morning the wind was from the south, but having started upon the trip around, they wanted to keep it up now.



This fair wind wafted them on with fine success, the sails doing great execution. That night they were at the mouth of the Kissimee River, but slept aboard their boats, deeming it more advisable.

Here they met an old fellow upon a peculiar flat-boat. He was a hunter, Alligator Ferguson by name, and had a great many saurian skins on board the home-made craft, which he was about to take up to Kissimee City.

They had a good deal of fun with him during the evening, as he was a comical old genius. Archie had anchored beyond him, but the south wind wafted such a strong scent to his nostrils, coming from the alligator-hunter's boat, that he was obliged to change his anchorage and haul around more to windward.

Lying there in his canoe and smoking his pipe, Archie allowed his mind to run back over the whole trip, beginning with the launch upon Tomoka Creek.

His mind lingered more fondly upon certain points than others. The brightest feature was of Eden and its genial proprietor, Captain Richards, with his smiling face and joking ways.

From one point to another his thoughts flitted,



like a bee passing from one flower to the next, supping the sweets. Gradually there came confusion, and Archie had fallen asleep.

He awoke at midnight and, as usual, took an observation. The sky was clear and the wind balmy from the south.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## GOOD-BY TO THE CRUISERS.

Merrily they pushed on during the early part of the day, but it did not come so nicely later, when the strong south breeze slapped the water against their bows, and sprinkled them generously with the spray.

They were veterans at this work, and kept on with long and short legs until three in the afternoon, when Ned blew a blast upon his fog horn to indicate that he had discovered a suitable spot for camping.

In half an hour all of them had gathered in the little cove, where they were sheltered from the south breeze.

The wind died down during the night, so that when morning came they found the lake in a dead calm. Accordingly they rolled up the sleeves of their flannel shirts, opened the collars to bare their chests, and then seizing the double blades began to cleave the waters of Okeechobee for the last time.

Up to noon they had seen nothing of the opening,



when they halted to brew a pot of coffee and rest for a while.

"Fellows, as I live I believe there's a breeze coming," said Archie.

"West?" asked Dick, anxiously.

"Yes."

"I thought as much. Clouds have been hanging in that quarter for some time."

Sure enough, in ten minutes the water was dimpled with a fresh breeze from the land. Close up it seemed still, but a hundred yards from shore the tiny wavelets began.

"Aboard with you! There's a storm coming by night, and we had better be safe in camp at that time."

Ned's words struck them all favorably, and soon the white wings of the mosquito fleet were spread to the gentle breeze.

At last they sighted the mouth of the canal. It was a welcome sight. They ran in and came to anchor close to the bank.

The storm was a delusion and a snare. It passed off with but little rain, and left the wind in the north.

The canoeists spent their last night on Okeechobee



peacefully. They were only aroused once, and this by Archie, who vowed an alligator was trying to climb into his boat, but the others laughed at him, declaring that he must have been dreaming.

In the morning they were ready to start into the canal.

Paddles now came into play. This would last about all the time until they reached the 'Hatchee River above Fort Myers, when once more the sails might be rendered available.

They had to camp in the canal, something that was particularly unsatisfactory, for it was alive with yellow water-moccasins, and had disagreeable swampy borders.

Ned's voice rang out through the cut and amid the dim aisles of the swamp as he told of "the tar who had sailed away."

The captain, too, related some of his experiences in the line of adventure by field and flood, so that, taken all in all, the evening passed pleasantly enough, despite the fact that they missed the cheery glow of a camp-fire.

Tents were buttoned down very closely that night, for there was a haunting fear lest some of the nu-



merous moccasins might try to force an entrance, and such unwelcome visitors were not to be tolerated.

All of them were glad when morning came, so that they might proceed.

An early start was made, and they were glad when a little lake opened before their eyes.

Upon this body of water they ate lunch and camped at the farther side, in order to avoid spending another night in the canal.

During the next day they made the second lake, and again found a camping spot upon the shore.

They were now ready to descend from the headwaters of the Caloosahatchee River to the gulf, having met some men with a dredge in the canal, and learned all that was necessary from them.

"Here's our last camp-fire in the heart of Florida," said Ned, a little dejected, as they sat around the cheery blaze that night.

"Then you think we will reach Fort Myers tomorrow?" asked Archie.

"We'll make a big try for it."

"That means an early start?"

"Yes."



"All right. I'll wake you up."

Archie was as good as his word, for while the gray dawn was still battling with the shadows of the fleeing night the camp was aroused by a terrific and unearthly noise, as if Gabriel and his trump of doom had suddenly come upon the scene. It was only Archie leaning out of his boat and tooting upon his old fish horn.

All was soon astir, and the grateful incense of coffee ascended from the fire. When it had boiled up twice and been dashed with a little cold water, it was set aside to settle.

Having started, they paddled for some time until the stream became wider. Then the sails went up with a hurrah, the wind being fair.

How grateful it was to glide along without muscular exertion. The breeze became stronger, and soon they were speeding on toward their goal.

The scenery for a time was just about what they had been expecting for days past, as the river was narrow and the banks inclined to be marshy.

Further down it would open wide and present a grander view.



They passed Fort Thompson on the run, and were saluted with handkerchiefs.

At another time they might have enjoyed stopping and spending some time at this historical spot, famous during Osceola's time, but just now they were anxious to reach Myers.

Some miles below they met a miniature steamer, the *Spitfire*, ascending the river to Fort Thompson.

There was a party of excursionists aboard, and they cheered the canoe fleet as long as the boats could be seen. A tongue of land shut them out of sight, but the cruisers were feeling good at thus meeting their fellow men again. Strange, indeed, how glad we are to see mankind after rushing off for a pilgrimage to the forest in order to be away from the world.

Late in the afternoon the river widened until it presented a majestic breadth indeed, being some miles from shore to shore.

This was an indication that they were nearing the beautiful little settlement of which they had heard and read so much.

Presently they sighted it.

The sun was low in the west, and only for the



breeze favoring them so, they would never have been able to have made their port.

At Fort Myers they landed and were joyfully received by friends who had long awaited their coming.

The great cruise from the Halifax River to the gulf had now become an accomplished fact, for they were once more upon tide water, although still twenty miles from the gulf itself.

Fort Myers was at that time a pleasant little village, and boasted of stores and churches such as were then to be found in no other South Florida town.

It had not a thousand souls in its borders, all told, but being the winter home of a number of wealthy men, such as the cattle-kings of the Florida savannahs, Thomas Edison, the inventor, and others, the place seemed like an oasis in the desert to our weary cruisers.

Green grass was to be seen here, pretty gardens abounded, and all manner of tropical fruit trees could be found.

Our friends made themselves at home at once, for they intended spending a week here at any rate, en-



joying themselves. During that time they could make up their minds as to their future course.

A steamer would take themselves and their boats to Tampa or Cedar Keys in case they decided so to travel, while on the other hand, if the votes counted in favor of keeping on, a wonderful cruise in these small boats lay before them.

At any rate, be the decision what it might, we have accompanied them safely down the east coast and across the heart of Florida, making a trip that would stand alone in the annals of Florida canoeing, and bring them honor among their fellows of the A. C. A.

Their long cruise had been filled with stirring incidents that would never be forgotten, and many a time while seated around the glowing fire up North, Archie and his fellow canoeists would, in imagination, live over again the scenes through which they had passed while paddling under the palmettos.

THE END.



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